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The Courier

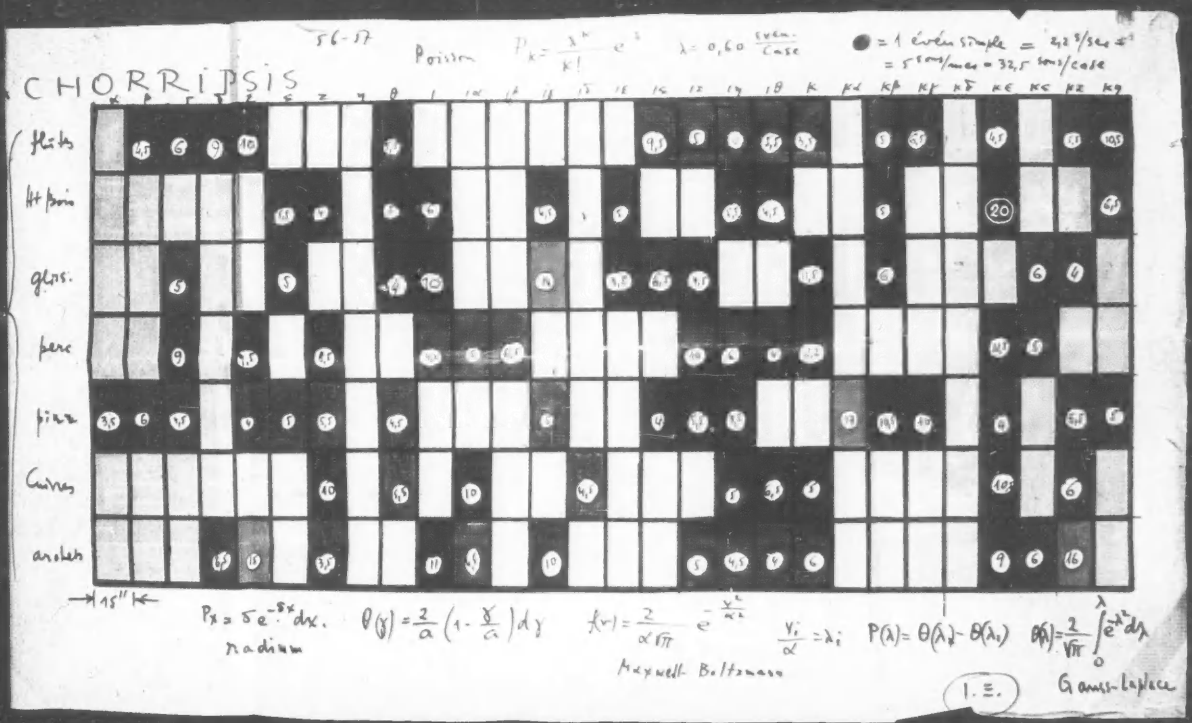
BURGESS

ESTRELLA

LAMINE KONTE

VIGLIETTI

XENAKIS



MUSIC ON THE MOVE

Photo © Sabrina and Roland Michaud, Paris

A time to live

44 Afghanistan

The man with the rose

The music of Afghanistan has assimilated influences from an exceptionally wide range of origins and periods. Incorporated in it are elements of ancient types of music from India, Turkey and Russia, as well as traces of ancient Greek music and certain musical forms close to those of medieval Europe. It is thought that some unusual features of the music of the high valleys of the Pamir mountains may be traced back to the ancient civilization of central Asia. Above, Afghan craftsman in the bazaar at Tashkurgan.

UNESCO
The Courier
A window open on the world

Editorial

"WITHOUT music, life would be nothing." Nietzsche's aphorism neatly encapsulates the importance of music in human history, a subject so vast that this issue of the *Unesco Courier* can only attempt to trace a few of the many directions in which music is moving today—the context in which it is created, produced and listened to.

In the West it is widely felt that music is going through a period of crisis. It is true that the experimental work of modern composers, in conjunction with technical innovations, has transformed the conditions in which both popular and so-called serious music is created through the mysterious and inexplicable process which Anthony Burgess examines in this issue. For a modern composer like Iannis Xenakis, scientific thought is part and parcel of creative renewal, as his own work amply demonstrates.

While some forms of contemporary musical experimentation are taking place in relative isolation, other traditional forms are today acquiring a range and significance they have never had before. In Latin America this is happening with protest songs and the "nueva canción", new songs which have emerged from a specific historical situation, and, as Uruguayan composer Daniel Viglietti describes, have had a continent-wide impact.

Musical feedback between continents can be fruitful. It is, for example, a not uncommon misconception that African music is produced within a rigid tradition. How far this is from the truth emerges from the testimony of Lamine Konte, an African "griot" or musician-storyteller who in this issue describes the wealth of modern musical life in Africa and the vitality of its traditional components. He stands at a cultural crossroads between Africa and Europe, and draws inspiration from both continents.

China is a country with an especially long musical tradition. An instrument such as the Chinese lute is surrounded by a pattern of symbolism which has been recorded in writing since very early times. In this issue we publish a text on the subject by the great Dutch orientalist Robert H. van Gulik.

The development of the electronic media (cinema, television, records, radio) has vastly increased the accessibility of music worldwide, so that it is now possible to speak of a "phonosphere", as does our contributor Mikhail Tarakanov. This phenomenon is not without risk.

In addition to the danger of noise pollution and, eventually, of the weakening of the creative sensibility to which Professor Nils L. Wallin draws attention, there is also the possibility that certain forms of production may distort or debase musical values. The long association of cinema and opera, whose moments of fulfilment and of tension are here analysed by Dominique Jameux, is a fascinating example of a phenomenon in which such risks may arise.

Finally, it is impossible to overemphasize the role of music as a form of social communication. The pianist Miguel Angel Estrella is a leading figure among those who are trying to bridge the gap between so-called classical and popular music, the product of a false antithesis. By designing a concert hall in which listening ceases to be a passive activity, a musician-architect like Xenakis is also opening wider the gates of access to music.

Cover: score of *Achorripsis* (1956-1957), a work by Iannis Xenakis for 21 instruments. This "stochastic" music is entirely composed on the basis of the calculation of probabilities. Length 7 minutes.

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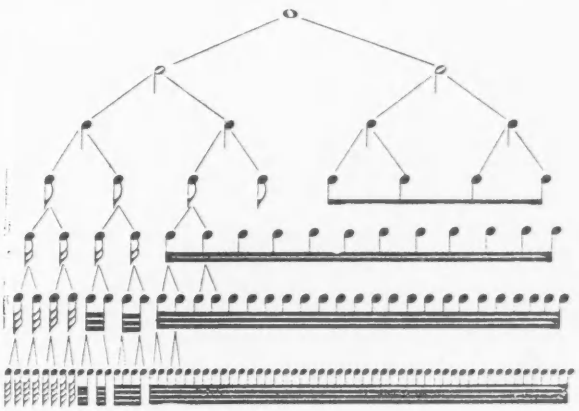

Unesco's first 40 years

To mark Unesco's fortieth anniversary, the next issue of the Unesco Courier *will be a double number containing an anthology of extracts from some of the best articles to have appeared in the magazine since it began publication.*

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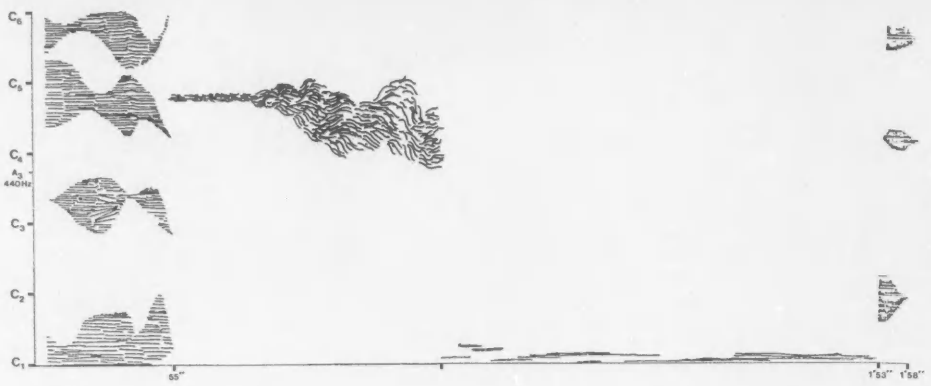


Iannis Xenakis, an architect in music and a musician in architecture, has been for over thirty years a leading composer whose influence has spread throughout the world. Perhaps more than that of any other living composer, his work illustrates the important role of scientific thought in the aesthetics of contemporary music. Below, an exclusive *Unesco Courier* interview with Iannis Xenakis.

Science and music

An interview with Iannis Xenakis

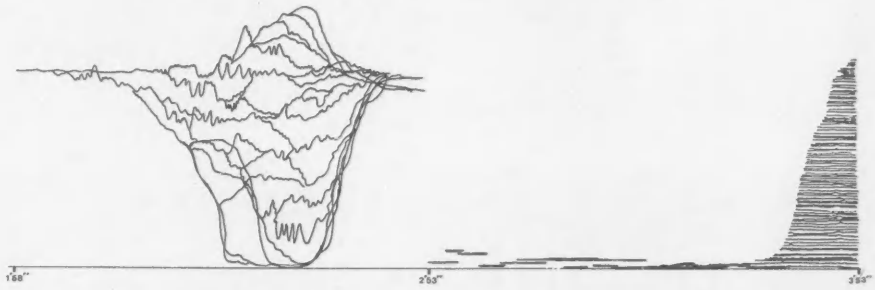
Iannis Xenakis, besides being a musician you are also an architect. How do you account for these twin preoccupations?

I am not really an architect in the professional sense of the term. When I worked with Le Corbusier, a good many years ago, I was involved in both activities at once. In particular, I collaborated on the Cité Radieuse residential complex in Marseilles, the Convent of Sainte-Marie-de-La-Tourette in Eveux-sur-l'Arbresle, near Lyons, and the city of Chandigarh in India. And in 1958 I designed the Philips Pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels. But since then I have been concerned with making music, and occasionally, when the opportunity arises, with architecture.

What is your most recent project?

The plan for an experimental concert hall that I designed with the architect Jean-Louis Veret. It was short-listed for the Cité de la Musique music community centre at La Villette, in Paris, but was not the winning design. This concert hall is entirely different from a conventional one. It is a sort of potato-shape, so as to avoid being circular, which is very bad acoustically. So it has a rounded, oval shape, with walls that bulge slightly. Instead of a fixed floor, there are cubes one metre wide, each of which can accommodate two people: the contours can thus be modified and the levels can be varied by as much as six metres. This makes several combinations possible: groupings in the centre, or several groupings to left and right, or, again, a traditional stage. The instrumental performers can accordingly be placed in the middle, on a platform of cubes, with the audience all around them. But it is also possible to shift the focus away from the centre, or, on the contrary, to keep everything on one side only. Everything is possible. Running around the inside of the walls there is a spiral gallery which can accommodate the audience and also musicians, so as to produce a three-dimensional soundscape. The walls themselves are perforated with panels which can vary in their degree of absorbency to obtain the right degree of reverberation. Moreover, this entire volume can be made to communicate with another, much larger volume, which contains it and which opens outwards, thereby creating a great many new possibilities for performances. But this is not mobile architecture. Mobile architecture never works, because the machinery gets jammed.

Why is there such a link, in your opinion, between these two areas of creative activity, music and architecture?



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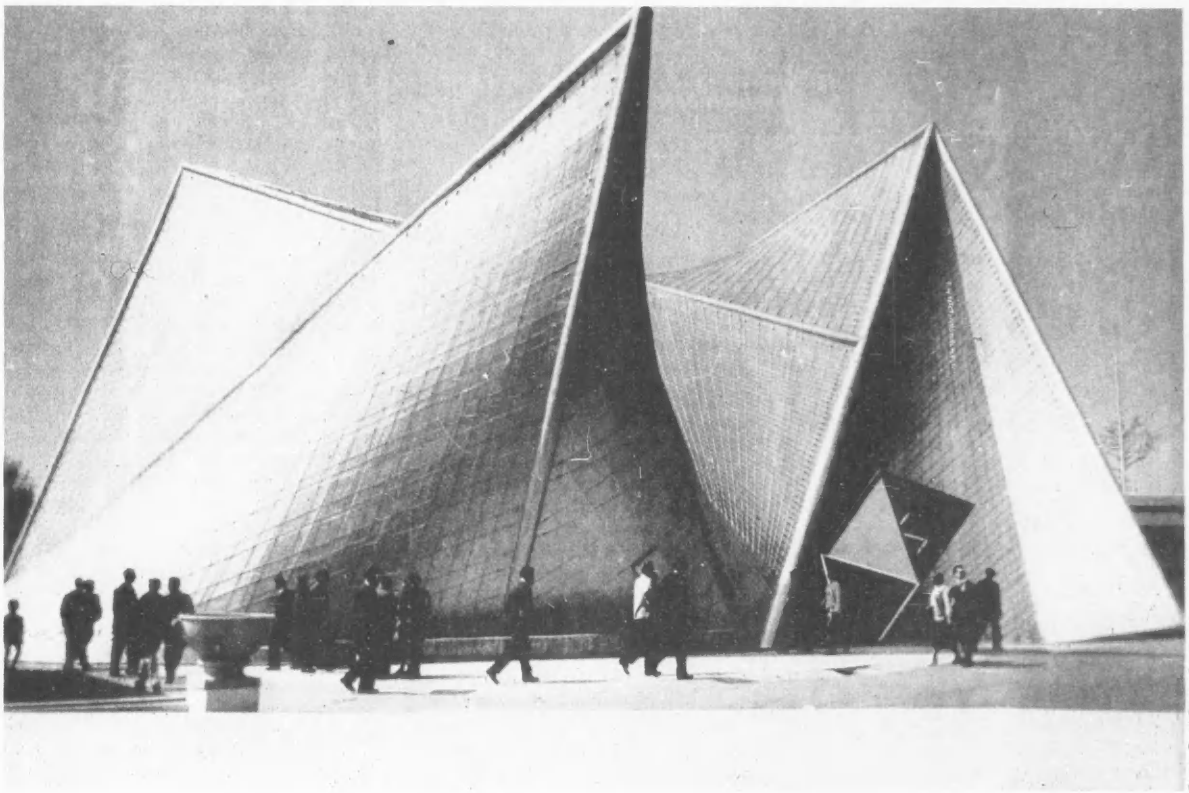

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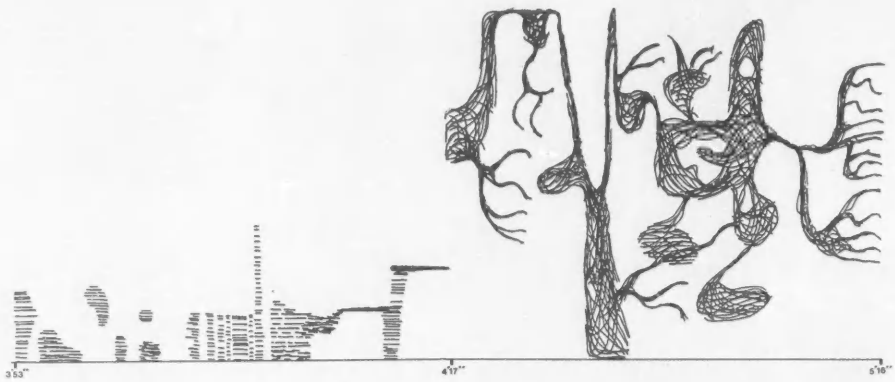
Above, the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels Exposition, designed by Iannis Xenakis in what was then a totally new architectural form composed of hyperbolic paraboloids. The world premier of* Poème Electronique *by the composer Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), with a film by Le Corbusier, was held in the pavilion during the Exposition.

Because architecture is a three-dimensional space in which we live. Humps and hollows are very important, in sound as well as in the visual sphere. The handling of proportions is essential here. The best architecture has to do not with decoration but with plain proportions and volumes. Architecture is the bare bones. Architecture is something visual. And in the visual sphere there are components which relate to what we call the rational sphere, which is also part of music. Whether we like it or not, there is a bridge between architecture and music. It is based on our mental structures, which are the same in both cases. Composers, for example, have used symmetrical patterns which also exist in architecture. If we want to discover the equal and symmetrical parts of a rectangle, the most informative way of proceeding is to rotate it. There are four directions in which a rectangle can be turned, and no more than four. Such transformations also exist in music: this is what was invented in the melodic field during the Renaissance. You take a melody: (a) you read it upside down; (b) you invert it in relation to the intervals; (c) that which rose towards the upper part of the scale now descends towards the lower, and vice versa. To this you must add (d) the recurrence of the inversion, which was used by the polyphonists of the Renaissance and which also occurs in serial music. In this example, we find the same four transformations carried out in architecture and in music.

Another example is the Philips Pavilion. To design this I used ideas borrowed from the orchestral music that I was composing at ▶



▶ the time. I wanted to create changeable spaces, which could be continuously altered by the displacement of a straight line. This produces hyperbolic paraboloids in architecture and masses of glissandos in music.

Can you give any examples from history of such a convergence, or even coincidence, between architectural and musical patterns?

Bartok used the golden section to achieve his harmonies. The golden section is taken from the visual sphere. It is a geometrical proportion, with the additional property that each term is the sum of the previous two terms. From the Egyptian pyramids to the Greek temples, it was used in architecture as a sort of miraculous key to the creation of something beautiful.

But for you this correspondence is fundamental?

Goethe said: "Architecture is frozen music." If we attempt to go further than this literary form of words in order to make a more objective claim, we soon come to mental structures which fall into the group category. The rotation of rectangles or melodies are groups of transformations. And in fact group theory deals with symmetries, down to the infinitely small level of particles—this is the only means whereby particles can be identified.

There are thus several levels of correspondence. The vaguest is the literary level, that of Goethe; I have mentioned another, more objective level, with my example of groups; there are others of a different type such as that of forming space either in sound or in architecture by using the acoustic axis such as glissandos, or the numerical axis.

But there are other possible approaches. Rhythm, for example. What is rhythm? It consists of chosen points along an axis, namely, the axis of time. The musician measures time as the walker counts milestones. The same thing is found in architecture—with a façade, for example. And piano keys are also architecture. They are regulated in a constant manner. In one case it is a matter of time, and in the other, of space. So there is a correspondence between the two. And this is possible because there is an underlying mental structure which mathematicians call an "order structure".

Stretching across the top of pages 4 to 8 is the score of* Mycènes Alpha *(1978), a piece of music created by Iannis Xenakis on the UPIC, a composing machine he invented (see photo opposite page). The work lasts approximately 10 minutes.

So in your experiments as a composer, you draw on experiments in physics, among other things?

Admittedly, I have not carried out such experiments myself, but I know that they are so defined. The surprising thing is that order structures, isomorphic mapping and group theory originated with mathematicians. They created, as it were, a more searching experimental psychology than the psychologists of the nineteenth century. Much later, researchers such as Jean Piaget discovered that the development of mental structures in children coincides with these definitions in mathematics and physics.

In your work as a musician, informatics plays an important part because of the new possibilities it opens up. You have even invented a music-composing machine, the UPIC. Can you tell us about it?

In the laboratory that I set up twenty years ago, we developed a system whereby anybody at all can compose music by drawing. It is both a tool for composers and acoustics experts and a teaching aid for children, who can learn to think in music without having to be trained in musical notation—learning by direct experience, in other words. This could not have been done without informatics, which yielded possibilities comparable to those brought by the invention of writing: preserving thought in symbols. Here, we can use our machine to preserve musical thought, since we can also store it.

Do children remain free and unaffected by the conditioning of a specific musical language?

They do. For example, an Indian or Balinese child who has learned the traditional music of his village will start to think musically in a different way if he or she uses this machine. Children can imitate Bach without having learned musical notation. Gradually the child assimilates this and fashions his or her own environment in a particular style.

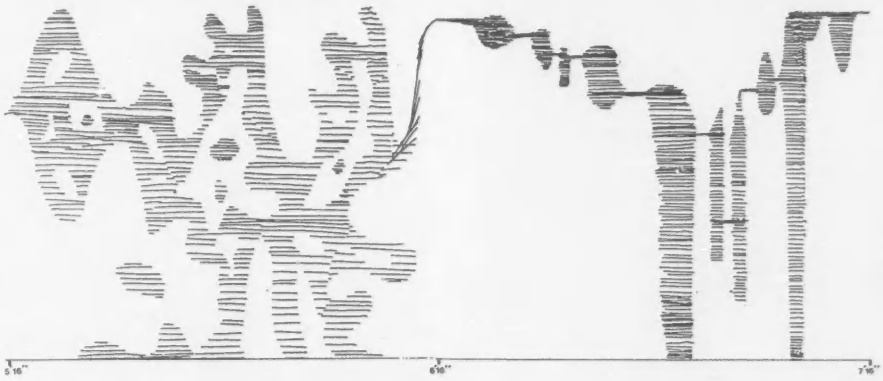
How do you use computers at present?

In *Diatope* (1977), the entire programme of laser beams and electronic flashes co-ordinated with the music, which was also produced by computer, had been devised by programming in computation centres. There were 1,600 electronic lights which could flash on and off individually in one twenty-fifth of a second. This cannot be done by hand: it is too fast and the numbers are too high. Furthermore, computers and other new technology available to us can produce light, so that it becomes possible to transpose the musical composition into the visual sphere and experiment with shapes and movements. The effects of light become like visible sounds. You can play with them just as you play with sounds, but in a spatial dimension instead. The morphological techniques (creating moving or stationary shapes) are often the same as in music. For example, if you want a cloud of points of light to appear and disappear, you need to introduce the calculus of probability, as I did with sounds. It is the same technique. But not everything is convertible...

It should be borne in mind that computer technology is only a tool. If I use mathematical functions or even sometimes physical theories in music, it is because there is a profound connexion between music and numbers. All of Pythagorean theory, of course, is based on this thesis. But it is a truth which derives from our own mental structure, nothing more. Once you have grasped this principle, it is easy to make use of whole chunks of mathematical thought, which is already present in music and even, in some cases, at a much more advanced stage than in mathematics.

For example, consider what happened when musicians in the tenth century invented musical notation, no longer relying on the vague indications of neumes, but using the staff and calibrated units of the characteristics of sound: pitch and duration. In doing this they transformed sensations which have nothing to do with spatial sensations into spatial notation.

Four hundred years before Nicole



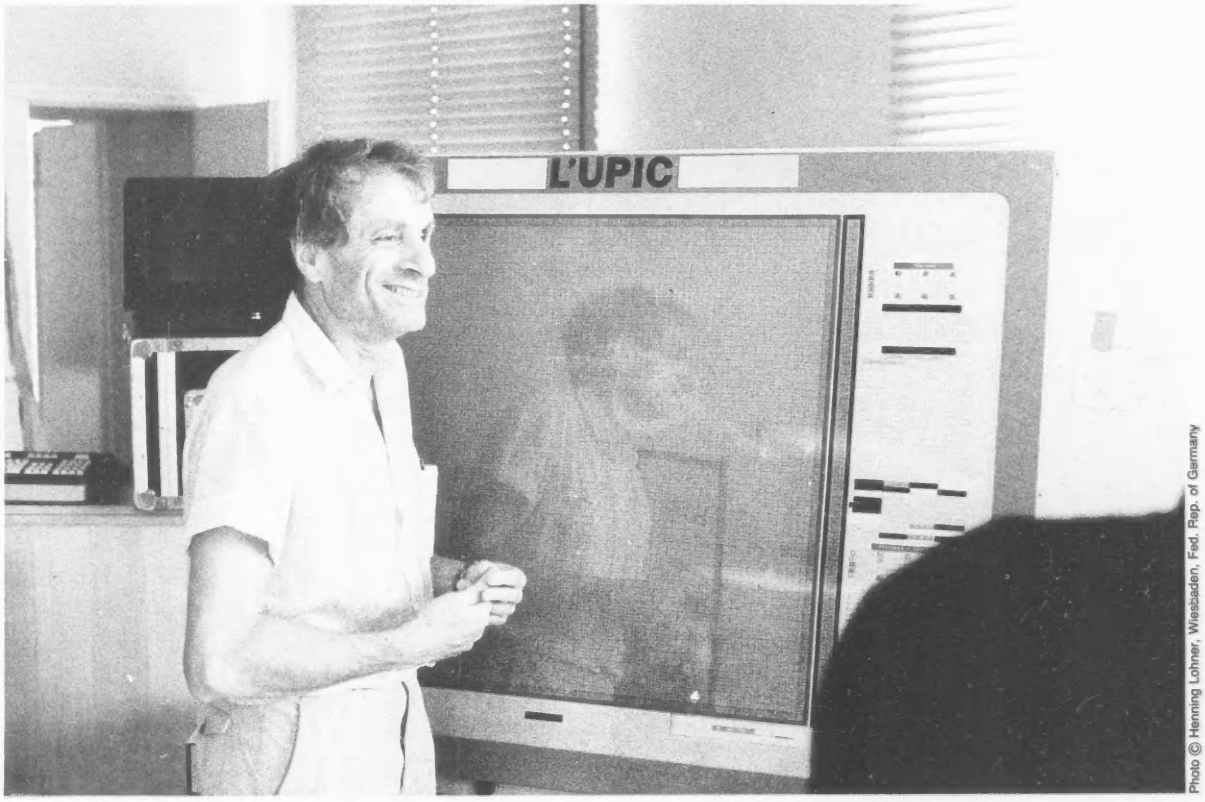


Photo © Henning Lohner, Wiesbaden, Fed. Rep. of Germany

Iannis Xenakis with the composing machine he invented in 1975 and which has since won wide acclaim. Known as the UPIC (Unité Polyagogique Informatique du CEMAMu), the machine makes it possible "to compose music through drawing, even without any knowledge of music or informatics", with a stylet on the electromagnetic table. It brings musical creation within reach of everyone and is a useful educational tool. It enshrines one of the composer's major preoccupations, the relationship between forms created in space and those created in time.

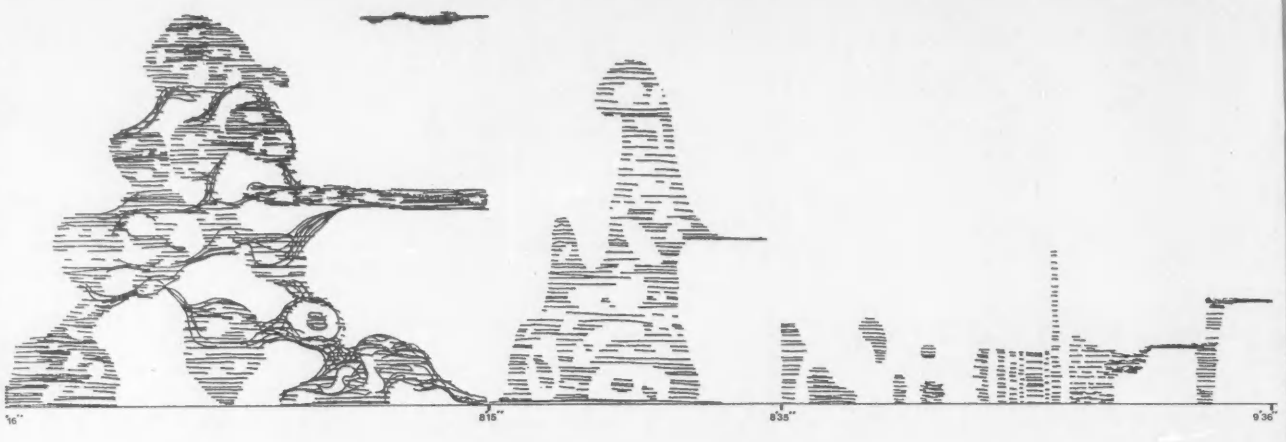
Oresme and six centuries before the analytical geometry of Descartes! Music was ahead of its time. I do not know whether Oresme or Descartes were influenced by musical notation, which did exactly what they did, and yielded even more abundant possibilities, since pitch and duration have nothing to do with space, whereas these two thinkers were working in space. This is only one instance where musicians, without knowing what they were doing, have stolen a march on knowledge and invention in other areas.

Do you see no sharp dividing line between traditional musical thinking and the most modern aspects of contemporary music?

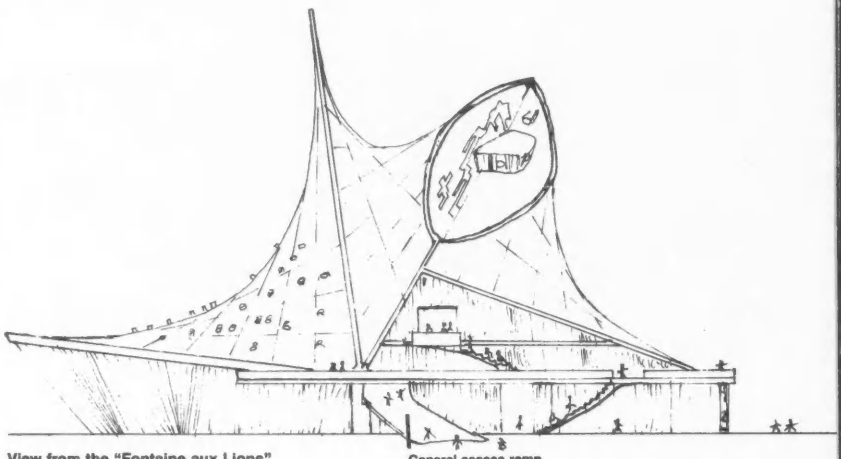
None. There is even a fairly smooth continuum which has resulted, for example, in serial music. The escape from tonal functions made possible by "dodecaphony", and later by serial music, was only relative, since Schoenberg and the Vienna School adopted self-imposed restrictions in returning to manipulations of the polyphonic type that came in with the Renaissance. This was the criticism that I levelled at the serialist school in the 1950s. If Schoenberg had been familiar with the science of his day, including philosophy, physics and mathematics, he would have introduced the calculus of probability.

So the musician should keep up to date with contemporary knowledge?

Yes. Of course, this is increasingly difficult. But even without a thorough knowledge of every field, he should be familiar with as ▶

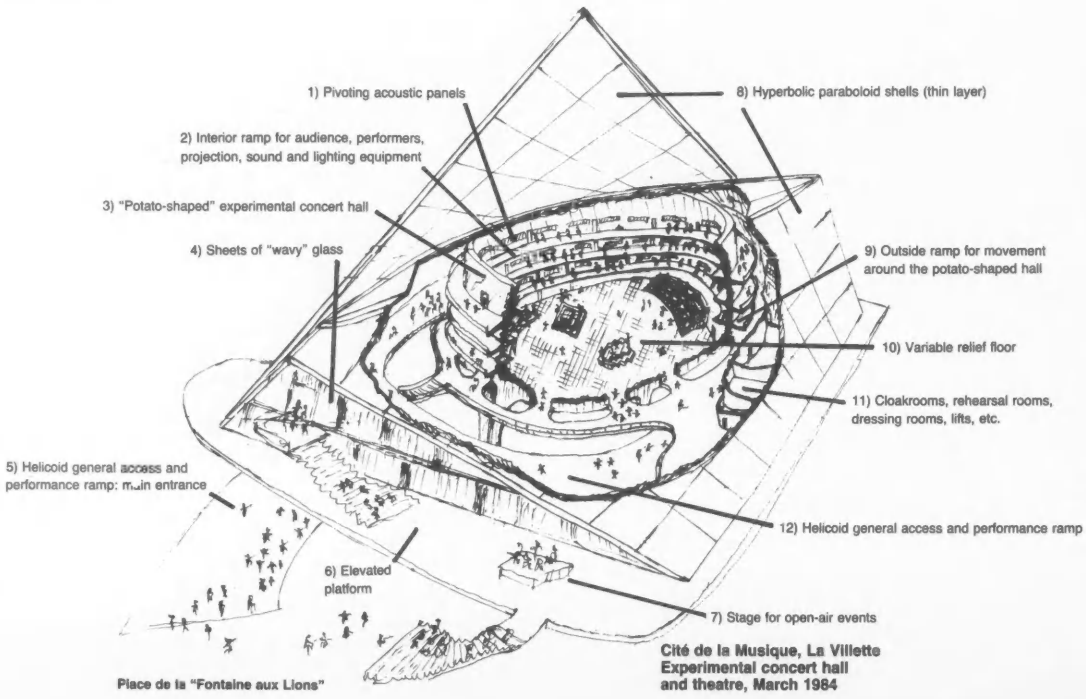


Drawings by Iannis Xenakis of a theatre and concert hall which he designed in association with the French architect Jean-Louis Veret. The building consists of two volumes: a large multi-purpose area enclosed by a thin concrete shell (8), inside which is the "potato-shaped" experimental music room itself, with its wood-covered concrete walls. The two areas communicate by means of pivoting acoustic panels (1). The building opens out through sheets of "wavy" glass (4) onto an elevated platform (6). The project, initially intended for the "Cité de la Musique" at La Villette, in Paris, breaks with all previous conceptions of what a concert hall should be, and is designed to "receive music, musicians, their technological equipment and the audience in three dimensions".



View from the "Fontaine aux Lions"

General access ramp



Place de la "Fontaine aux Lions"

Cité de la Musique, La Villette
Experimental concert hall and theatre, March 1984

Drawing © Iannis Xenakis, Paris

many elements as possible. For the essential core of knowledge—and this is what is marvellous—is easy to impart. For example, if one talks about degree of order or disorder, many people know what this means, but not explicitly. Now, in a film like *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Eisenstein was perhaps the first to create a mobile art of this kind: he artistically directs drifting masses of individuals, statistical events, since we see crowds moving one way and then another. This procedure was followed by other filmmakers in their turn, notably Abel Gance in his *Napoleon* (1926). If you tell people: this is what happens with clouds or galaxies or intrastellar gases, they understand immediately. I believe that there are fundamental concepts which are communicable.

How do you account for the central place of scientific thought in your musical aesthetic?

I drew my early inspiration from the culture of ancient Greece, and especially that of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. This was a period of extraordinary creativity in the history of humankind. It saw the birth of mathematics as we now know it. From a structural point of view, this axiomatic, Euclidian science is still continuing today. There has been no break.

Then there was philosophy. The other day, I was reading an article about the formation of the universe. It said that the whole of science up till now has been based on causality. But, today, we are starting to ask the following question: can the universe have emerged from nothing, without a cause? Astrophysicists are tending to think that it did. Accordingly, and this is the interesting point, the Parmenidean tradition is capable of changing and developing.

Besides these influences, there were my contacts with certain individuals such as Le Corbusier and Messiaen. Even if he is not a mathematician, Olivier Messiaen has a kind of affinity with numbers. This is apparent in his "modes of limited transposition", and in his love of Hindu and Greek rhythm systems. These two categories of music, moreover, are mathematical *par excellence*. In the sphere of rhythm, which is the handling of temporal number in the pure state, no music has developed further than percussion in India. African types of percussion, which are different, are also remarkable. With these kinds of music, I feel perfectly at home. I would even say, perhaps, that I have felt Western music to be more "exotic" than these. ■

IANNIS XENAKIS, *of Greek origin, is an internationally known composer who is also a mathematician and architect. A former professor at the University of Indiana, he currently teaches at the University of Paris I and is director of the Centre d'Etudes de Mathématique et Automatique Musicale (C.E.M.A.Mu.) in Paris, which he founded in 1966. His prolific output of over sixty works, some of them already classics, includes every form of musical composition. Among his works composed in recent years are:* Polytope de Cluny, *electronic and laser ray music (1972);* Cendrées, *for choir and orchestra (1973);* Aïs, *for baritone, percussion and orchestra (1980) and* Shaar, *for string orchestra (1982). This autumn his* Keqrops, *a work for piano and orchestra, will be performed for the first time, by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.*

Nueva canción

Latin America's song without frontiers

by Daniel Viglietti

THE history of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean can be told in song. Apparently the slightest of art forms, a mixture of words and music full of wit and feeling, songs illuminate the past centuries of our continent like a flash of lightning. They tell of arrows loosed against cannon, and later of peasants without land and workers without factories. Even more recently, they are harbingers of freedom in societies new-born. Song knows no frontiers: "The great songwriters transcend geography," observed the Uruguayan musicologist Lauro Ayestarán. "They create authentic musical units in a way that ▶

El Circo ***(The Circus), a tapestry by Violetta Parra, a noted composer and singer of Chilean popular music as well as a collector of Chilean folklore.***

Photo © 1980 NFC, Paris

▶ races, nations or mere geographical areas do not (...). Folklore thumbs its nose at geography."

But not at history. Songwriters are perhaps the real unifying factors in the political and cultural life of Latin America today. One reason for this is the extent of their audience. In a continent where levels of illiteracy are high, songs can be read with the ears. As a result of technological progress portable transistor radios are ubiquitous, and consequently the popularity of songs is spreading like seed scattered to the winds.

This raises the question of what kind of seed is being sown, and what kind of harvest it will yield. In the countries of Latin America it is impossible to ignore the pervasive impact of an alienating type of song, for the most part imported straight from foreign cultural capitals, or else home-produced with the mentality of colonized peoples. There is undeniable hostility to such trends as the *nueva canción* ("new song"). Despite this censorship, whether direct or indirect, the song that speaks to the people through the quality of its message threads its way through the labyrinth of repression and silence until it finds receptive hearers. Folklore, in the traditional sense of the term, is very close to the strains of the *nueva canción* or *nuevo canto,* questionable expressions but ones which were accepted by participants in the First Festival of New Latin American Song, held under Unesco auspices in Mexico City in 1982.

When a rural Ecuadorian, in the heart of the mountains, listens on his transistor radio to the Chilean Victor Jara singing his *Plegaria de un labrador* (A Farmer's Prayer), he is, although he may not realize it, listening to a piece of folklore. Such songs belong to a group of sometimes ephemeral phenomena which might be called "subjective folklore", and which have not yet been given a place among the categories made by folklore specialists. There is also an anonymous mass of sounds which have left no trace at all, except in popular memory. To rediscover that memory, and to recapture the experience of listening to those sounds, is a task crying out for new generations of researchers, but thwarted by a chronic lack of support from national governments and international bodies.

The thread of history that stretches unbroken from the sounds produced by the Jew's harp to the cassette recorded by a singer of *nueva canción* passes through stages which are too numerous to describe in this article. But mention should be made of the generation of composers and performers which provided a link between that past and today. And "today" will soon be "yesterday", if we think of the earliest ventures of Atahualpa Yupanqui, to take one notable architect of this continuity between two periods. A few decades before the explosion of the modern media, Yupanqui would have been a troubadour, a tavern poet, a wandering minstrel. The amplification of his message (by radio, records, cassettes, cinema, television and video cassettes) has enormously multiplied his impact. Song, that ancient form of oral communication, is also taking on a new lease of life by conquering new spheres of influence and new publics. Its range and its access to the media are giving it an added intensity of purpose and a new potential to affect people and to "heighten awareness".

"New song" is a river through which several currents swirl. In the late 1950s and in the 1960s, the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara and the Chilean experiment provided opportunities to develop more direct and deliberate political messages which gave added meaning to the term "protest song". The participants in the First Protest Song Meeting, held in Cuba in 1967, identified more strongly with the aesthetic and ideological features of the songs than with the actual term "protest song", which nevertheless continued to stick for some time. In the 1970s, other political events in Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, Grenada, El Salvador and Guatemala boosted the development of this genre.

To sing "from the side of power" was the novel experience of the Nueva Trova Cubana, "the new Cuban song" movement, which set to work with rigour and imagination, determined not to yield to the temptations of apologetics. The movement was most successful in the sphere of lyrics, where it reached poetic heights which were no obstacle to communication, even with audiences elsewhere in Latin America. In musical terms, working in a medium strongly influenced by the former colonial powers, the Nueva Trova began to find its way by working with the Sound Experiment Group of the Cuban Institute of Cinema Art and Industry and with Cuban composer Leo Brouwer guiding the first steps of the movement's original singers, Pablo

Daniel Viglietti photographed moments before the beginning of a concert he gave as part of Nicaragua's* Vacaciones felices *("Happy holidays") programme. The audience consisted of children from a poor district of Managua, the capital.

Photo © All Rights Reserved

Photo © All Rights Reserved

Portrait of Atahualpa Yupanqui, one of the most celebrated composers and singers of Argentine and Latin American popular music, by the Ecuadorian painter Oswaldo Guayasamin (Quito, 1977).

Milanés, Silvio Rodríguez and Noel Nicola.

Launched by such pioneers as Dorival Caymi and Vinicius de Moraes, the *Música Popular Brasileira*—a more accurate label since it does not exclude the purely instrumental—has become the Latin American movement that boasts the richest variety of styles and professional possibilities as well as a relatively wide range of recordings. As a result, works of great musical value, such as the songs of Chico Buarque, have become extremely popular.

It can safely be claimed that *nueva canción* today exists throughout "our America", that voices travel across frontiers and that we are witnessing the birth of a distinctive kind of polyphony and the emergence of a synthesis which is still not widely perceived, except in the work of certain internationally known artists.

Almost all of Latin America has been subjected to the onslaught of cultural imperialism, and in resisting this it has learnt to sing of the everyday lives of humble folk, their joys and frustrations, hopes, sorrows and festivities, and, when circumstances make this inevitable, of their suffering in prison or in exile.

Little has been said of the divided world of song in those countries where political conditions have entailed exile, either within the country or abroad. The *nueva canción* of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, to take only a few examples, is a kind of duet: one voice sings within the country, in contact with harsh everyday reality; the other, in close contact with the first, sings in exile, creating and disseminating an itinerant culture of resistance.

If we look at this two-sided process in the case of Uruguay, which has returned to the path of democracy, we need a wide-angle lens in order to keep in focus all those who sang of freedom inside the country. And we need keen hearing to catch the voices of all the Uruguayan singers scattered among the exiled population throughout the world: the Los Olimareños duo, Alfredo Zitarrosa, Anibal Sampayo, and many others. The freedom to create was repressed within our country from 1973 to 1985, but so it was abroad, since we were all to some extent prisoners of a certain attitude towards expressing our affliction in song. That "state of exile" left its mark on our writing. Inside the country, people sang out of suffering, but in a spirit of defiance and, with a determined gaiety in their creation, they stood up to be counted in the shadow of the general danger. (I am thinking of such groups as Los que iban cantando and Rumbo, of Leo Maslíah and Rubén Olivera).

Both teams worked in unison, one in the fiery furnace, the other in the mists of exile, to produce a truly passionate counterpoint. In 1985 the return from exile began, and a new era called for new songs. In our songs the oldest among us had to come to terms with a period when our model democracy was overwhelmed by oppression. The young ones, during the dictatorship, had to sing in a more oblique fashion. And those who come after us: how will they, in their turn, have to sing? Facing up to the immediate past with eyes wide open? What can we do now, when "almost" everything is possible? In those who chose to stay behind when they could have left, what strings are being tuned? In those returning from exile, what new flowers of song are budding? In the voices of those who have been released, what new dreams will take flight on wings of melody? After the doves and the hawks, what firebird will come to herald new songs? Singers of the *nueva canción*, who remained, departed or returned, but who will never be silenced: what new movement shall we add to the sonata? Or, to choose an example nearer home, what new stanza shall we add to the *milonga?* ■

DANIEL VIGLIETTI, *Uruguayan composer and poet, is a leading figure in Latin American music who abandoned a career as a classical guitarist in order to write and perform popular songs. A journalist and a researcher into folk music, he was imprisoned in his country because of his songs in 1972, and freed after an international campaign on his behalf sponsored by such personalities as Miguel Angel Asturias, Jean-Paul Sartre and Mikis Theodorakis. Exiled in 1973, he settled in France, and returned to Uruguay in 1984 where he was greeted by an immense crowd of fans and sympathizers. His biography (by Mario Benedetti) accompanied by an anthology of his songs, was published in French in 1974 under the title* Chansons pour Notre Amérique.

The mystery of melody

by Anthony Burgess

Text © Anthony Burgess 1986

ANYBODY can write a sort of melody. Give, as the Chinese do, each note of the musical scale a number. Do re mi fa so la ti do : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8. You can turn your telephone number or car registration number into a sequence of notes. This is perhaps not long enough for a true melody, but it will yield a theme. A theme may be defined as a scrap of melody crying out to be developed—not just into a true melody but into a whole symphonic movement, into a whole opera. All music begins with a germ like that, and it may lie sleeping in a passport number.

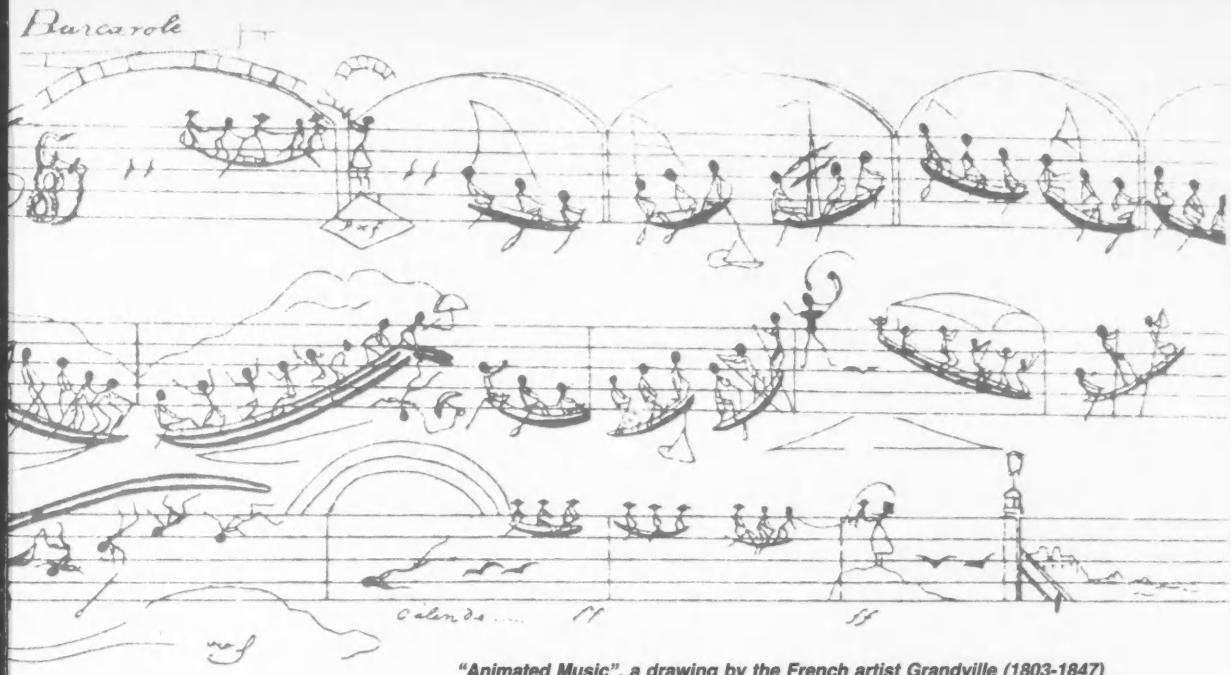
But we all know that the great melodies of the world are not made in that manner. The great melodies of the world arrive without warning. They spring out of nowhere, and they are only given to the great musical geniuses.

Perhaps there is an analogy between the language of speech and the language of music. In every spoken phrase, even in a single word, a melody may be lurking. Take the phrase that comes in a poem by Edgar Allan Poe—"the tintinnabulation of the bells". Recite that often enough, and the sheer rhythm—regardless of meaning—will generate a musical phrase.

"*La ci darem la mano*". Da Ponte gave that phrase to Mozart in the opera *Don Giovanni,* and Mozart heard in it the melody which begins an exquisite duet. In one of Beethoven's last string quartets we hear the question "*Muss es sein?*" (Must it be?) and the answer "*Es muss sein*" (It *must* be!). Beethoven goes to the trouble of placing the words under the notes. They are not intended to be sung, since the musicians are string-players, not

Photo © SPADEM, 1986, Paris

Front cover by Picasso for the first (1919) edition of Stravinsky's piano arrangement of his "Rag-time".



Drawing taken from *Histoire de la Musique, Vol. II: Les Débuts du Romantisme*, © Editions Rencontre, Lausanne

"Animated Music", a drawing by the French artist Grandville (1803-1847) which appeared in the illustrated periodical* Le Magasin Pittoresque *in 1840.

vocalists; the composer is merely being honest enough to disclose the inspiration of his theme.

But great melodies are not often bound to words. Bach's Air on the G String or the marvellous theme of the Choral Prelude *Wachet Auf* are clearly pure sound which owes nothing to verbal inspiration. Where did they come from? Anyone who, like myself, has composed music may give some sort of an answer. A melody arrives in the mind. It seems to be something remembered, something that has always existed but been long forgotten. Then it suddenly appears. Occasionally this melody is genuinely something remembered—something written by somebody else. This can cause trouble—lawsuits for plagiarism. There was a popular song in the 1920s called "Yes, We Have No Bananas". This is made up out of Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus, the folksong "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean", and the aria "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls" from Balfe's opera *The Bohemian Girl*. Plagiarism? Possibly. Popular song-writers used to plagiarize all the time. Sheer memory? Possibly again. Who knows? These things are difficult to prove in a court of law.

The truly great tune resembles no other. It has certainly come from heaven, or from nowhere, and it usually comes when unexpected. But it sometimes comes when it is needed. Imagine that you are commissioned to compose a symphony. This is to be performed in two months' time by a great symphony orchestra. The least difficult work will be the orchestration, which will come last. The most difficult will be finding themes for the first movement. Here you will require two main groups of themes, one aggressively masculine, the other delicately feminine. These themes must be capable of development—that is, turning into other themes, combining in counterpoint with other themes, turning into great soaring melodies. The urgency of the commission will sometimes force your unconscious mind into producing melodic germs full of potential. Or some little melody composed in childhood will suddenly present symphonic possibilities. For another great mystery about melody is that it is more likely to come to you when you are seven than when you are seventy.

The mystery remains. But in an age like ours, which doesn't approve of mysteries, the production of great melodies is no longer regarded as one of the jobs of the composer. Be honest, and consider which pop or rock song of the last twenty years contains a genuine melody. You will hear fine melodies in, say, George Gershwin or the Beatles, but few in the music of the Rolling Stones. The sexual impulse in the rhythm, or the content of social protest in the words, will seem to the new generation more important than sheer melody.

What applies to popular music applies even more to the music termed serious. The dodecaphonic composers, led by Arnold Schoenberg, showed the way to a mechanical mode of composition very popular with the young products of the music academies. You make a theme out of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale—a theme of just twelve notes, for one of the rules is that no note may come more than once—and then you play this theme backwards or upside down or upside down and backwards. Your musical skill will lie in the management of tone colour, of dynamics and climax, but not in the creation of melody as we used to know it. You will find such music damnably hard to sing.

There are people around who say that there can be no more great melodies. They say that, with so few notes in the musical scale, all the original themes must already have been written and there is no point in looking for new ones. This is nonsense. There is still an infinitude of books to be written out of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, and there is still an infinitude of melodies to be generated out of twelve notes and the innumerable rhythmical combinations of these which wait to be exploited. We have just got out of the habit of thinking melodically. This is very bad for us, since there is nothing in the world more heartening than a great tune.

Where would the French Revolution have been without the *Marseillaise*, a tune written by a soldier named Rouget de Lisle, who was suddenly touched by inspiration? Where would the communist revolution have been without the *Internationale* (a far inferior tune to the *Marseillaise)?* But greater than tunes are those fifty-minute streams of melodic invention we call symphonies and concertos. These are always the products of conscious skill and ingenuity, like works of engineering, but they could not exist without those spurts of melodic inspiration from the unconscious mind. We do not know what strange inner force is at work spinning away at themes and tunes, but we bow down to the results. The great mystery of music remains. ■

ANTHONY BURGESS, *the British novelist, critic and man of letters, has devoted much of his creative energy to music and has composed many full-scale orchestral works including three symphonies, as well as* The Blooms of Dublin, *a musical version of James Joyce's* Ulysses, *the libretto of which is to be published shortly. Among his most recent published works are* Flame into Being, *a study of D.H. Lawrence (1985), and* Homage to Qwertyuiop, *a collection of his essays (1986).*

Music for all

by Miguel Angel Estrella

ONE of the most common prejudices governing the division of labour in music, as well as its marketing and consumption, gives rise to the splitting of music, musicians and their public into two warring and apparently irreconcilable factions: "popular" as opposed to "classical".

By "popular music" I mean the forms of music created, sung or danced to by the people of a country or a region. The word *popular* refers to something that "originates from the people", not something imposed on it. Thus I exclude from the category of popular music the soulless consumer product generally associated with the variety show.

The reality underlying this sterile conflict cannot be reduced to a mere question of form. Few people are prepared to admit that this prejudice springs from an urge to segregate human beings into social categories in defiance of that most universal of all phenomena—art.

This obsolete and snobbish attitude stands revealed as particularly anachronistic and reactionary in this day and age when, one might suppose, the mass media should be bringing the highest forms of creative art of all periods within reach of their vast audience.

But this is not happening. Obscure commercial arguments, which conceal élitist attitudes indefensible in other areas of culture, separate consumers of music into those who can choose judiciously what they will listen to and those who are deprived of that right and have to be content with stereotyped works of inferior quality. Low or non-existent purchasing power and low standards of literacy or general education are at the root of this restriction.

It is easy to picture a music-lover living in a capital city: he buys tickets for concerts and festivals at which he can appreciate the performances of the best modern artists and compare them with recordings made in the past. He has access to information through channels which do not necessarily coincide with the selection that the media impose.

Both his education and the information at his disposal enable him to choose, and naturally he seeks out the highest-quality producers of art and strives to be actively, or at least passively, involved in the mainstream of events in the world of musical creation, by taking part in the rituals of that world—concerts.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to imagine one of the thousands or tens of thousands of country-dwellers or labourers in Romania, Bolivia, Afghanistan or the Philippines—to take examples from different continents—having any access to this kind of choice. Such a choice, like all forms of knowledge, would be one contribution to a universal vision of human history. And yet individuals such as these make up the majority of a country's people.

These population groups, dispossessed of their ethnic or folk styles of music and bewildered by the bombardment to which they are subjected by the media, very often have no choice but to consume pseudo-artistic products labelled "popular music" by their main distributors.

This levelling down process now unites most of the world's population. That which in the past was specific to one area, the industrialized countries, and to one population group, the city-dwellers, is now, on the eve of the twenty-first century, interlinking rural populations, factory-hands and office workers all over the world. Advertising, radio, television and records have spawned this civilization of sound, which is even threatening to oust written language. And music is becoming the main vehicle of this kind of communication. But what kind of music?

Even in the "developed" countries, we musicians are aware that disadvantaged audiences believe themselves incapable of understanding the music of Debussy, Messiaen, Mozart, Schubert, Krenek or Dutilleux (or Astor Piazzolla, Leo Brouwer, Manolo Juárez, McLoughlin, or Charlie Parker).

Nevertheless, once the barriers of convention have been broken down and pretentiousness and paternalism swept away, such audiences are highly sensitive to the essence of the message that these composers wished to put across, miraculously transmitted by the performer. Hence the tremendous responsibility that devolves on us musicians as the fundamental negotiators of this social change, which entails breaking moulds and leaping over the barriers which divide us and which cut us off at the same time from our natural partners in dialogue: the public.

It would be naive to suppose that preaching along these lines could bring about any radical shift in so entrenched a structure. The prejudice must be attacked at its roots. For it is undeniable that we musicians are trained to fit into an élitist system which sets itself up as the only possible choice. This way of thinking is tanta- ▶

Photo © "Musique Espérance"

"To take music to the most disadvantaged audiences, to go to those whose social and cultural background have hitherto deprived them of this joy and would not normally set foot in a concert hall." This is one of the aims of "Musique Espérance", a movement created by the Argentine pianist Miguel Angel Estrella. "Musique Espérance" organizes musical events in factories, prisons and schools, and also for the elderly, for the sick, and for handicapped children. Left, Miguel Angel Estrella in January 1983 during a "concert-talk" with the children of workers at a factory in Belfort in eastern France.

Photo © Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

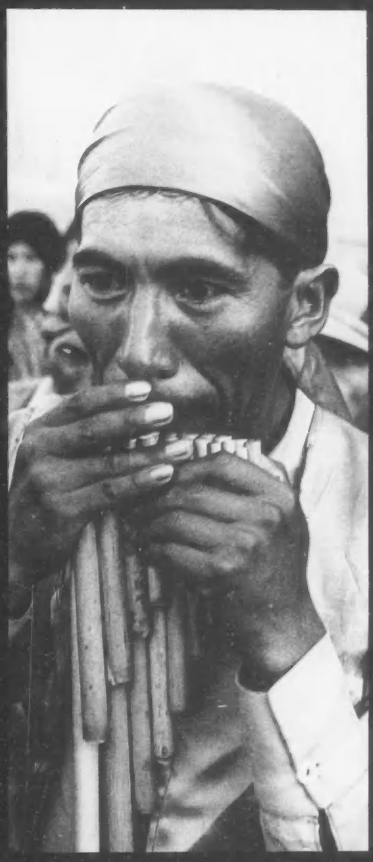


Photo Unesco-Cart, 1962

Photo Unesco-Cart

"Just as it should be natural for the music of Berio to be heard in juxtaposition with that of Corelli or Mussorgsky, there is no reason why the music of Bach should not be played during a religious service with Negro spirituals and songs by Rubén Blades, Leda Valladares, La Melchora Abalos or El Negro Mamani...". Above, The Song of Songs, *an early 17th-century Flemish engraving after a painting by Cornelis De Vos. On the lectern is the score of a motet for 5 voices by Daniel Raymond, cantor at Liège around 1580. Right, Pan piper in the region of Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, during the August festival in honour of the Miraculous Virgin of the Lake. Left, a harpist at Cuzco, Peru. Below, a concert of electronic music given by the French composer Jean-Michel Jarre in the Place de la Concorde, Paris, on 14 July 1979.*

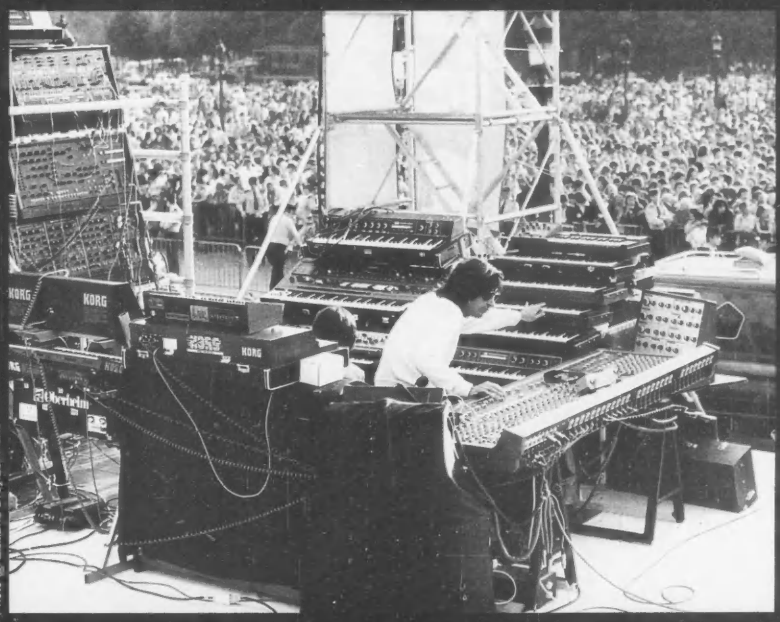


Photo © Editions Dreyfus, Paris

▶ mount to the fatalistic belief that there will always be rich and poor.

So first of all the performers must be made aware of the falsity of this division between "cultured", "serious" or "intellectual" music and the other kind. It is essential to expose the perversity of this kind of prejudice, which not only condemns to mediocrity those who are not invited to the feast of the elect, but also threatens with sterility those performers who do not understand that what gives music its life is the dialectic between the simplest and most vibrant forms and those which are most elaborate and cerebral.

This is the story of our Western music, and this is the story of music as it has developed all over the world.

With the exception of a few well-informed musicologists and those artists who intuitively realize the truth, few people are aware of the steady influence of traditional music on the works of the great composers of all periods. Nor are they aware of the social commitment made by many creators of genius. Each musical era has had its own reading of the concept of human justice and solidarity in the development of society. And each has made different uses of popular traditions.

Luther and, later, Bach restored the people to their central place in worship, through popular church choral music. During the Enlightenment, music had its inspired leaders with their vision of a society of greater humanity and justice for all. Such men as Mozart or Beethoven, each in his own way, rejected all forms of slavery at a time when the idea of the democratic State was beginning to take root.

In the nineteenth century came the romantic transition to nationalism. And in our own century composers such as Stravinsky, Ravel, Bartok, Gian Francesco Malipiero and Manuel de Falla—all belonging to the so-called "new objectivity" movement—drew inspiration from the spontaneity and immediacy of popular music. They were opposed to the sometimes overwhelming pessimism and density of other post-Wagnerian trends. Finally, one need scarcely draw attention to the role of popular music in the works of Hector Villa-Lobos, George Gershwin and the Argentine composer Carlos Guastavino.

Conversely, and to an increasing extent, musicians in all branches are exploring ways of developing the technical side of classical music, and finding in it a source of inspiration which need not conflict with their popular calling.

In my country, Argentina, varied and distinguished branches of popular music are coming to grips with this influence. Atahualpa Yupanqui is well versed in Creole tradition but is also a performer of Bach. Piazzolla, whose early training was similar to that of Carlos Gardel and Aníbal Troilo, later sought the counsel of the great French pianist Nadia Boulanger. The Anacrusa group, the specifically Argentine expression of that new syncretic music which ranges from Chick Corea to Paco de Lucia. Many more examples could be cited.

So why is there this enduring dichotomy between classical and popular, when the two should be inseparable parts of something called simply Music, without any hierarchical segregation? For the good of music, which is so closely bound up with the health of society, it is desirable that different kinds of music should flourish side by side, without any prejudice between different genres.

Why should it not be acceptable to organize concerts on a satisfactory aesthetic pattern combining Chico Buarque, Xenakis and Mono Villegas, Jaime Torres, the National Orchestra, Susana Rinaldi, Michel Portal, Patrice Fontanarosa, or El Cuchi Leguizamón, León Gieco and those fine pianists Liliana Sáinz and Maurizio Pollini?

This would at any rate break down the tyranny of brand labels; for music is not a commodity. It is a passion which fires its apostles—musicians—with the desire to be witnesses in sound to the spirit of the age.

Just as it should be quite natural for the music of Berio to be heard in juxtaposition with that of Corelli or Mussorgsky, I also think there is no reason why the music of Bach, during a religious service, should not reverberate in the same air as Negro spirituals and songs by Rubén Blades, Leda Valladares, La Melchora Abalos or El Negro Mamani. These last, alas, are unknown outside the Calchaquí Valleys of Argentina.

For the essence of music is communication and communion, energy whose impulse is directed outwards. And the more people there are who take pleasure in it, the better it is for society and, ultimately, for art. ■

Flutes made of reed, bone, wood, metal or terra-cotta, have been a part of musical tradition throughout the world ever since prehistoric times. Below, bone flutes adorned with the feathers of Amazonian parrots and beetles' wings (Venezuela, Orinoco basin).

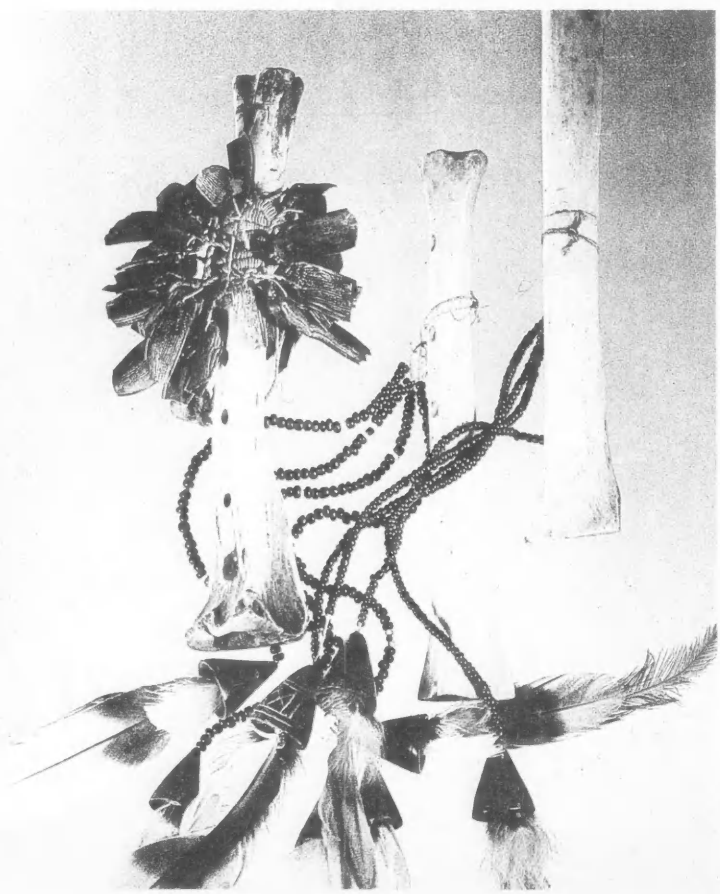


Photo © Hansmann, Munich

MIGUEL ANGEL ESTRELLA, *of Argentina, is a world famous pianist. As well as giving recitals as a concert pianist, he has always played to popular audiences, including peasant farmers and Indians in Latin America. Imprisoned and tortured in 1977, he was freed in 1980 after efforts made on his behalf by musicians all over the world, and has since continued his career as a concert pianist. He is the founder of the Paris-based association "Musique Espérance" which aims to bring music and musicians into the service of human rights and to restore to music its role as a form of social communication.*

Photo P. Pogosian © APN, Moscow

Left, a concert of popular music and dance in a vast concert hall at Erivan, capital of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. In the Soviet Union, popular music and folk music are fully integrated into the public system of music consumption. This encourages greater professionalism but inevitably creates the risk that some of the spontaneity and continuity in the creation of folk arts may be lost.

Folklore and phonosphere

by Mikhail E. Tarakanov

THERE will always be people who claim that when they listen to instrumental music—or "pure" music—it conjures up no spatial images in their imagination, and that they experience it only as duration. One thing is certain, however: it is difficult to conceive of music as a phenomenon without a precise image of musicians playing in a specific place, whether an enclosed or an open space. By its very nature, and whatever the context, music is, and will remain, a performance.

In the USSR, popular music occupies a prominent position. As we find wherever folklore has stayed alive, spontaneous musical improvisation, intended to be heard by a gathering of people and calling for certain spatial conditions, is still a major form of creative art. Professional art based on oral tradition has also been preserved over very wide areas, in Central Asia and in Transcaucasia, in the highly elaborate form of the *mugam,* epic tales told by renowned artists who have learned a special technique of singing and acquired a perfect mastery of the traditional instruments of the East.

This popular music has conquered new territory on the stage, on radio, on television and in records, and in so doing has been assimilated into the public system of music consumption. This expansion has had an encouraging impact on the status of music in general, while at the same time it has pushed traditional types of creation towards professionalism with the new spatial forms needed for producing and listening to music and the professional sophistication that these require.

The creators of folk music have to learn musical techniques, polish their performances and rehearse intensively to prepare for concerts when they use such specialized facilities as recording studios, rehearsal rooms, and the stages of variety theatres. A delicate problem arises: exposed to the limelight of professionalism, the spiritual nature of popular creative art is likely to wilt, and needs protection. Folk song and folk dance troupes are as plentiful in the USSR as they are well-loved beyond its borders. As a consequence of this powerful movement to take over folklore, living folk art is tending to lose its spontaneity and formal continuity and to be turned into a subject for study and teaching.

Fortunately, a movement is also emerging to preserve the full authenticity of folk art, notably through staging performances that are faithful in all respects to the spirit of popular festivals. In many regions folk troupes have sprung up which are keeping alive the old styles of singing.

Lastly, new forms are taking shape which have their roots in oral tradition but are by no means identical to it. Open-air song festivals that attract huge crowds are one example of such a trend. Meanwhile, many popular singers and vocal and instrumental groups are also striving to safeguard the unique character of folk music.

The masterpieces of folk art are now reaching more and more people—millions of viewers through television—familiarizing them with the different national styles and encouraging contact between the hundred or so nations which make up our country.

It is true that such contacts have a long history, as is borne out by the tradition of Russian music of Eastern inspiration dating back to Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and Mussorgsky; but in the age of the mass media it has become a phenomenon on a grand scale.

Conversely, the increasing use of sound production techniques is exerting a growing influence on the language of music through the possibilities it affords for manipulating sound by such means as the special arrangement of instruments in the concert hall, the amplification of weak sounds, the "purification" of tone quality, the "broadening" of sound range, and the combination of prerecorded music or sounds with musicians in live performance.

Use of these techniques is not confined to concert performances and the broadcasting of concerts on radio or television. It also extends to the use of music in other fields, some artistic (soundtracks of cinema or television films) others not (news or reports on topics of general interest).

Thus the places where music is listened to have become more and more numerous, ranging from the giant stadium to the cinema auditorium and the radio cassette in the home.

There is no longer any area of human activity from which music can be *a priori* excluded. Music, one might justly claim, has won a total victory over the world in which we live: a "phonosphere" encompasses the planet. The problem today is not whether the phonosphere should or should not exist, but how it can be made more harmonious. The pollution of daily life by noise, with its consequent blunting of auditory and musical sensitivity, has attained alarming proportions. We must keep it at bay and, at the same time, allocate a larger share of the human phonosphere to music which requires us to listen to it intelligently and which is charged with meaning. ■

MIKHAIL EVGENIEVICH TARAKANOV *is a director of research at the Institute of Art of the Academy of Sciences and of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR. A specialist in the theory and history of 20th-century music, he is the author of many published works including* The Style of Prokofiev's Symphonies *(1968),* The Musical Theatre of Alban Berg *(1976) and* The Works of Rodion Shchedrin *(1980).*

On wings of song

The lute and the crane in Chinese tradition

by Robert Hans van Gulik

THE crane is one of the traditional Chinese symbols of longevity. Just like the tortoise, it is said to live more than a thousand years. The expression "crane age", is a much-used metaphor for advanced years.

The dark crane is especially credited with a fabulously long life. The *Gu jing zhu* ("The Encyclopaedia of the Past and Present") written by Cui Biao in the Jin period says: "When a crane has reached the age of one thousand years, it turns a dark blue colour; after another thousand years it turns black, and then it is called a dark crane."

Ever since olden times the dark crane has been closely associated with music. The *Rui ying tu ji* (attributed to Sun rou chi of the Liang period) says: "A dark crane shall appear at a time when there is a Ruler who understands music. When in olden times Huangdi executed music on the Kunlun mountain for all the Spirits to dance, on his right side there flew sixteen dark cranes."

Sixteen dark cranes also appear in a story related by the great historian Sima qian: "When Duke Ling of the Wei dynasty (534-493 BC) was travelling to Jin, he halted on the bank of the river Bu. In the middle of the night he heard the sounds of a lute being played. He asked the members of his suite, but all respectfully said that no one had heard the sounds. Then the Duke summoned Master Juan, and said to him: 'I have heard the sounds of a lute being played, but when I asked my suite no one had heard it. Thus it seems that it is caused by a spirit or a ghost. Write this tune down for me.' Master Juan assented and, seating himself in the correct position, having placed his lute before him, he listened and noted down the tune. The next morning he said: 'I have obtained the tune now, but I have not yet learned it. I beg you for one more night to learn it thoroughly.' The Duke agreed, and yet another night passed. On the following morning he reported that he had mastered the tune. Then they left that place, and proceeded to Jin. They were received by Duke Ping (557-532 BC) who gave a banquet for them on a terrace.

"When all had come under the influence of the wine, Duke Ling said: 'When on my way here I heard a new tune; permit me to let you hear it.' When Duke Ping agreed, Duke Ling made Master Juan sit down by the side of Master Kuang, place his lute before him and play it. But before he was half through, Master Kuang put his hand on the strings (to deaden the sounds), and said: 'That is the music of a doomed State; one must not listen to it.' Duke Ping asked: 'What is the origin of this tune?' Master Kuang answered: 'It was made by Master Yan, to please the tyrant Zhou. When king Wu defeated Zhou, Master Yan fled to the east, and drowned himself in the river Bu. Therefore it must have been on the bank of that river that this tune was heard. Who first hears this tune, his State will be divided.'

Photo taken from *Heaven and Earth*, Lund Humphries, London © 1979 John A. Goodall

Illustration from a Ming dynasty encyclopaedia shows a musician playing the lute out of doors with the instrument on his knees. An incense burner stands on a small rustic table nearby. Lute playing was always accompanied by the burning of fragrant incense.

Duke Ping said: 'I have a great love for music. I wish to hear this tune to the end.' Then Master Juan played the entire tune. Then Duke Ping said: 'Are there no tunes that are still more sinister than this one?' Master Kuang said: 'There are.' 'Could you play them for me?' The Master answered: 'My lord's virtue and righteousness are not great enough for that. I may not play them for you.' But the Duke said again: 'I have a great love for music; I wish to hear them.' Then Master Kuang could not but draw his lute unto him, and play.

"When he had played once, sixteen dark cranes appeared and alighted on the gate of the hall. When he played the second time, they stretched their necks and cried, they spread out their wings and started to dance. Duke Ping was overcome with joy, and leaving his seat he drank the health of Master Kuang. Having returned to his seat, he asked: 'Are there no other tunes that are still more sinister than this one?' Master Kuang said: 'Yes, there are those by which in olden times Huangdi effected a great reunion of ghosts and spirits. But my lord's virtue and righteousness are not great enough to allow you to hear this music. And if you hear it, you will perish.' Duke Ping said: 'I am advanced in years, and I have a great love of music. I want to hear these tunes.' Then Master Kuang could not but draw his lute unto him, and play. When he had played one, white clouds rose in the northwest. And when he played another, there was a storm wind, followed by a torrent, that made the tiles fly from the roof. All that were present fled, and Duke Ping, in a great fright, threw himself down near the entrance of the hall. Thereafter, Jin was beset by a drought that scorched the earth for three years in succession."

This story, which is extremely archaic, not only furnishes a good example of the relation of the dark crane to lute music, but also illustrates in a striking way the awe-inspiring qualities which the ancient Chinese attributed to this music. Something of the ominous atmosphere of this old tale has been preserved in a number of later ghost stories connected with the lute.

It is only occasionally, however, that we find faint echos of the magical nature of the association between lute and crane. In later times literary tradition replaced this old belief with purely aesthetic considerations. When the scholar is playing the lute in his garden pavilion, a couple of cranes should be leisurely stalking about. Their graceful movements should inspire the rhythm of the finger technique, and their occasional cries direct the thoughts of the player to unearthly things. For even the cry of the crane has a special meaning. It is said to penetrate unto Heaven: "The crane cries in the marshes, its sound is heard in the skies," and the female crane conceives when it hears the cry of the male.

The crane is described as having a great love for lute music. The *Qing lian fang qin ya* ("Elegance of the Lute, from the Blue-Lotus Boat") relates that "Lin Bu greatly enjoyed playing the lute; whenever he played, his two cranes would start dancing." And the same source says about Ye Mengde: "Ye Mengde loved the lute, and would play for a whole day without resting, the tones of the lute mingling with the sounds of a brook. Later Ye returned to mount Lu and sang songs, accompanying himself on his lute. On one occasion there suddenly appeared a pair of cranes that gamboled about and danced in his garden. Ye kept them, and they did not go away, but started to dance every time he played."

Several lute tunes hymn the excellent qualities of the crane. One treatise that describes cranes in a scholar's garden is entitled "Song of a pair of cranes listening to the babbling of a brook". Another tune, "Cranes dancing in the sky", celebrates the soaring flight of the crane. The *Tian wen ge qin pu ji cheng* ("Collection of Tunes Heard from the Sky") contains a tune entitled "A pair of cranes bathing in a brook". The introductory note added to this tune is not without interest. "Late in spring I visited a friend in Sichuan province. A pair of cranes were dancing in a clear rivulet. I observed their feathers white as snow, and the top of their heads red like vermilion. They fluttered up and down, and took their bath while dancing. Then they spread their wings and flew high up in the sky, and cried in harmony in the azure vault, making me doubt whether they were not Immortals. Then I drew my lute unto me, and composed this tune."

The Ming handbook *Shen qi bi pu* ("Album of the Strange and Mysterious") con- ▶

Photo taken from *Heaven and Earth*, Lund Humphries, London © 1979 John A. Goodall

Detail from an ancient Chinese lute manual showing the finger positions required to produce notes similar to the sounds made by animals. Illustration shows "the position of the right thumb to obtain the crying of a crane about to soar".

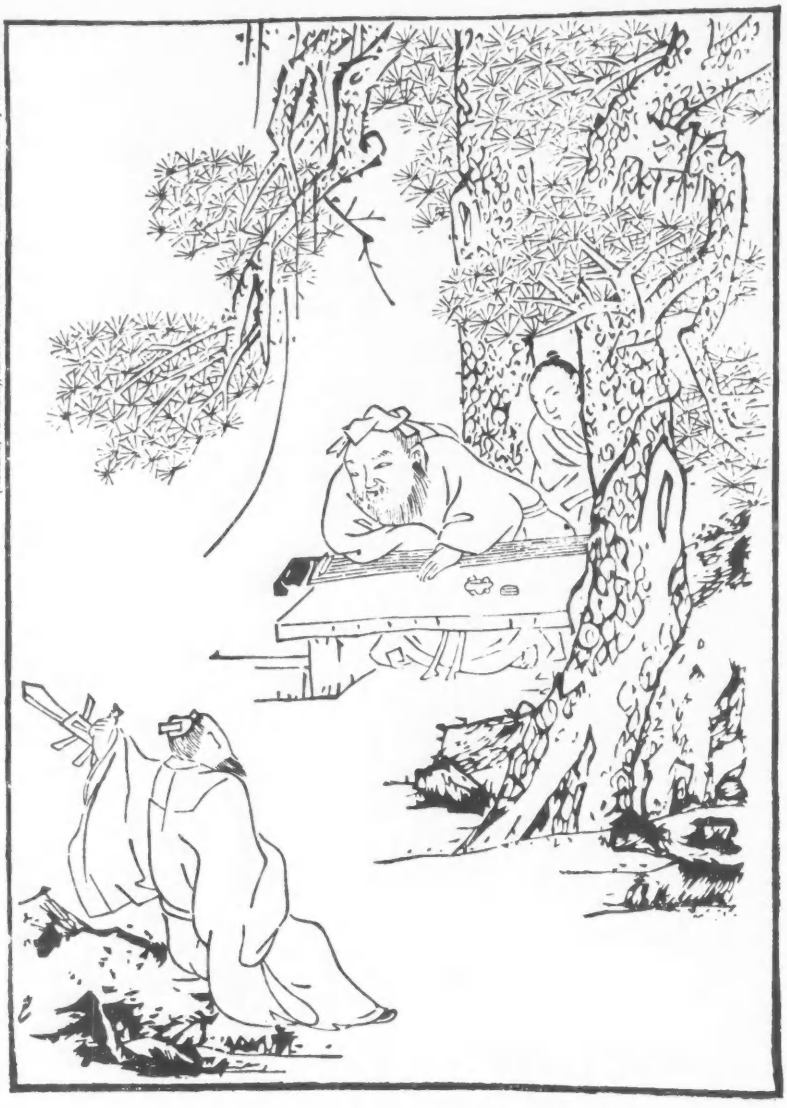


Photo © Sophia University (Tokyo) and Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc. (Rutland, Vermont), taken from *The Lore of the Chinese Lute* by R.H. van Gulik

"Take your lute with you and play before an old plum tree," says an ancient Chinese poem, and according to tradition plum blossoms appreciate the sounds of the lute just as much as cranes. The pine tree is also often associated with the lute, and when a lute-player is not depicted sitting in a plum grove he may be shown, as here, seated on a moss-covered stone beneath two spreading pines. In left foreground a man is tuning a four-stringed guitar.

Below, page from a lute handbook showing a position of the right hand. Legend above the picture reads, "The right hand, suggesting a flying dragon grasping the clouds." Written underneath is "The way to produce a chord with thumb and middle finger". Illustrations of finger positions were usually accompanied by a brief explanatory note, known as* hsing. *The* hsing *on this page reads: "The dragon is a holy animal, a pond cannot contain it. Its head and horns show a noble shape, its transmutations are inexhaustible. Having ascended to the throne (an allusion to the fact that 'Dragon' is a fixed epithet for the Emperor), the world is prosperous. It ascends in the air grasping with its claws, the floating clouds follow it."

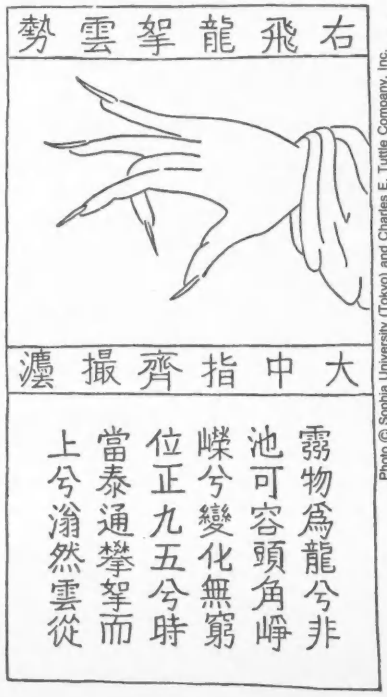


Photo © Sophia University (Tokyo) and Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc. (Rutland, Vermont), taken from *The Lore of the Chinese Lute* by R.H. van Gulik

▶ tains a tune entitled "Cranes crying in the marshes". The second half of the introductory text says: "The crane is a sacred bird. Its cries are most clear; they are heard at a distance of more than eight miles. The purpose of this tune is to compare the tones of the lute with the cries of the crane. I kept two cranes in the bamboo grove surrounding my lute hall. Sometimes, in a shadowy place, they would dance together, other times they would fly up and cry in unison. But they would always wait for the appropriate time: they did not dance unless there was a cool breeze to shake their feathers, and they did not cry unless they could look up at the Milky Way as if they saw the gods. When the time was not propitious they would neither sing nor dance. Recognizing the spiritual quality of these cranes, I composed this tune."

Various books give directions about how to rear cranes and to recognize birds of superior qualities. The qualities and outer marks of good cranes are described in the *Xiang he jing* ("The Book of Cranes"), a book which, though of doubtful authenticity, seems fairly old, and is found in many compilations of ancient books. Ming treatises especially abound in discussions about keeping and rearing cranes, and about how to make them dance: they may, for instance, be trained to dance to the clapping of hands. Chen fu yao (born 1612) says that excellent flutes can be made from the thigh bone of a crane: their sound is clear, and in harmony with the sonorous tubes.

Let me quote one final observation about the crane: "When staying in a country house in an empty wood, how could one let a single day go by without the company of this refined friend that makes one forget all worldly things?" ■

ROBERT HANS VAN GULIK *(1910-1967), Dutch writer and diplomat, was a distinguished Orientalist with a special interest in Chinese history. An authority on the Chinese language, he was also a skilled calligrapher. His scholarly works include:* Sexual Life in Ancient China *(1962) and* The Lore of the Chinese Lute *(1968) from which the present article has been extracted. He was also the prolific author of detective stories set in 7th-century China, whose hero, Judge Dee, ranks with such great fictional detectives as Sherlock Holmes.*

The *griot*

singer and chronicler of African life

by Lamine Konte

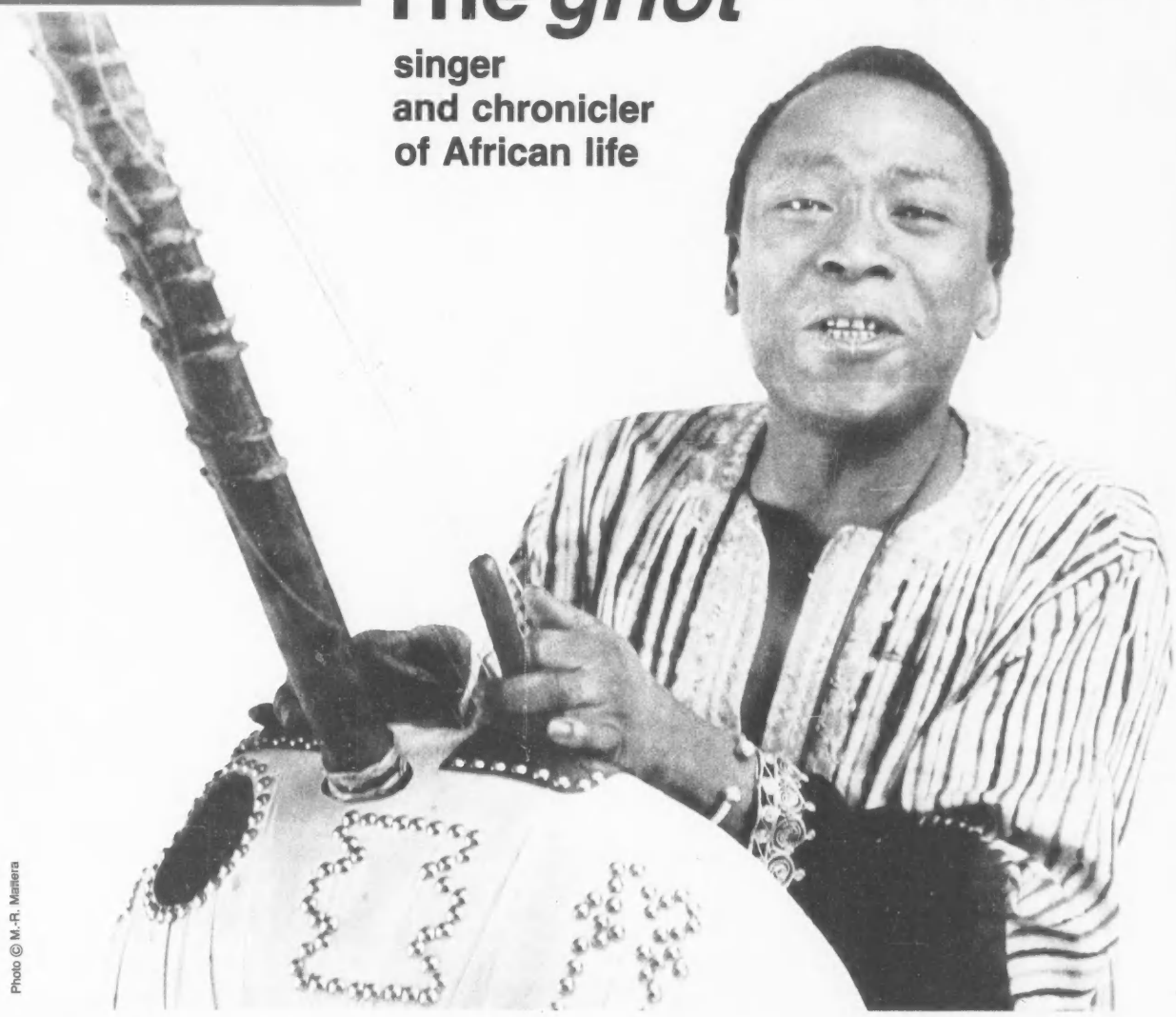


Photo © M.-R. Mallera

***In traditional Africa, the* griot *is a musician and singer who is also a kind of chronicler and historian of the society in which he lives. His art is transmitted from father to son. Photo above shows the author of our article, the noted Senegalese* griot *Lamine Konte, singing to his own accompaniment on a Senegalese instrument, the* kora.**

I am, first of all, an African from Senegal, and secondly I am a Casamançais. I was born in the area of southern Senegal known as Casamance, "Casa di Mansa", a name which is half Portuguese and half Mandingo, and which means "the house of the king". It dates back to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, when the Portuguese were in the region. More specifically, I come from a family of musicians or *griots*. We *griots* are simultaneously musicians, historians and singers, and our art is handed down from father to son and from generation to generation. I grew up in that world. Then I became interested in Western culture and acquired a grounding in Western music, particularly classical music. This varied background enables me to express myself authentically and at the same time to be on the same wave-length as a French audience.

I have been told that my father was a famous *griot*. I was not fortunate enough to know him, since he died when I was barely one year old. My father is still a formidable competitor: all those who knew him are constantly comparing the two of us. He was an excellent musician. Soundioulou Cissoko, who was his fellow performer, is today one of Senegal's great players of the kora (a 21-stringed harp-lute). They collaborated closely.

I did not receive any musical or poetic training as such. It comes about spontaneously when you are born into a family of musicians. A little African sociology will help to explain why. Since the Mandingo empire, Mandingo society has been organized and structured according to a caste system which has lasted from the thirteenth century to the present.

Each caste contained men who were particularly gifted at a certain craft: there were, for example, the castes of the *griots*, the weavers, the ironsmiths, and the warriors. When you were born into a family of *griots*, hence of musicians, you were *ipso facto* predestined to make music. That tradition has become a thing of the past, now that the sociological context has evolved: with colonization, Africa started to be influenced by other civilizations, schools were established, and nowadays a child from a family of *griots* can ▶

This article is based on an interview with Lamine Konte by Marc Kerjean, a French radio producer who is a student and broadcaster of African music, blues and jazz.

The* kora *is a 21-string instrument which produces a sound somewhere between that of the harp and that of the guitar, depending on the way in which its strings are plucked. The sound-box is made from half a calabash. Along the neck are strung 21 rings to each of which a string is attached. There are two sets of strings, separated by a bridge; each set is plucked by the thumb and index finger of one hand. To tune the instrument, the mobile rings are moved to tighten the strings until the right notes are obtained. Above, kora-player Arfan Kouyate and singer Penda Diabate, during a 1982 concert of Mandingo music in a lecture hall of the Sorbonne, Paris.

▶ grow up to be a schoolteacher, a mason, or a mechanic. But originally, when you were born into a *griot* family, you devoted yourself exclusively to music. The only activity permitted outside music was farming, since it was for the common good.

Music is a universal phenomenon, and all the musicians in the world began in approximately the same way: they were people who had the gift of combining notes in a pattern that was harmonious to the ear. Since writing was not current in some parts of Africa, it was necessary to entrust a social group with the task of reciting history, and thus of acting as the memory of the African people.

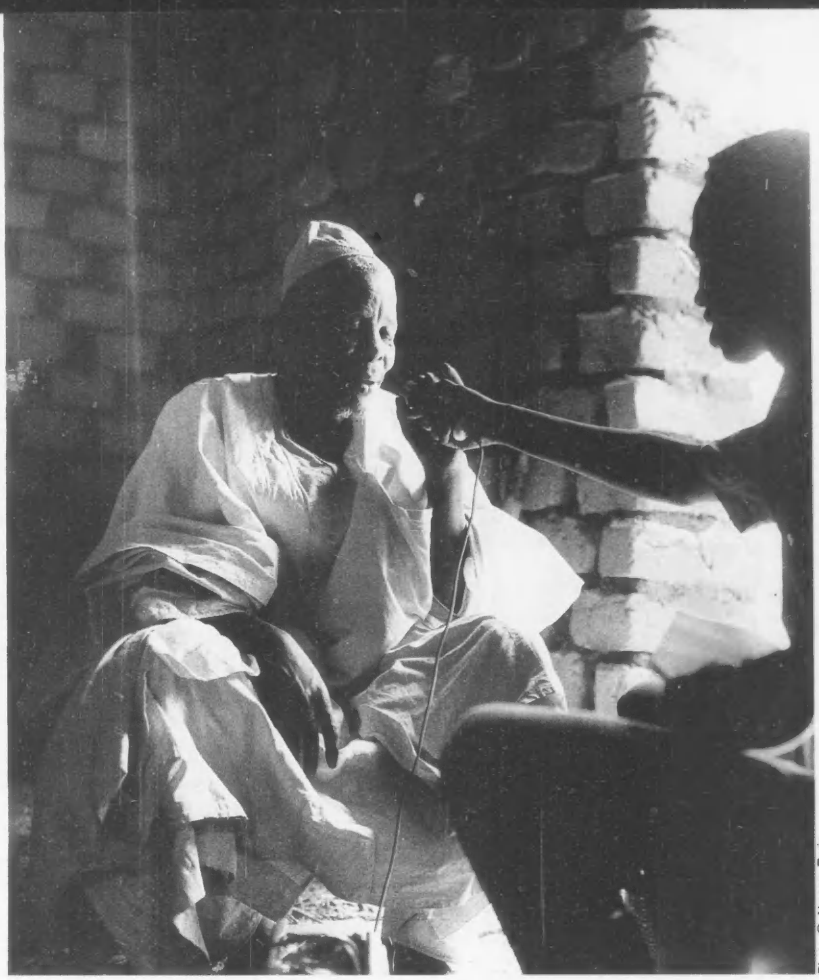
It was, accordingly, the task of the *griot* community to pass on an oral record of history. A musical medium was needed to do this. The *griots* made instruments that were suited to the languages and the rhythms in use. We owe the *griot* tradition to the intelligence of the earliest politicians: they grasped the fact that one cannot govern a community without historians, and thus without music. There are also many legends which tell of the origins of the *griots*, but in my opinion they came into being quite naturally: since they wanted to make music, they freely indulged their desire. And this activity has devolved on them since the reign of Sundiata Keita, the first emperor of Mali—since the fourteenth century, in other words.

The participation of the *griots* was necessary at the major turning-points in a lifetime, such as birth and marriage. They also sang the praises of their hosts and knew family histories. They usually earned a living from the gifts that they received in return for their services. It is possible for a *griot* to bear a grudge against an ungenerous client, for after all, he is a man, with a man's weaknesses. But his essential role is to sing the praises of individuals without any discrimination on financial grounds; he sings for the poor fisherman and the rich merchant alike. His aim is to bring to life the history of the family of his client, just as his father taught it to him.

Some people believe that *griots* possess magic power, but in Africa, magic power belongs rather to iron-smiths. Some *griots* have power, since they possess a considerable store of wide-ranging knowledge and are receptive to all forms of culture; when they reach a certain age, they are necessarily powerful, but is this magical or is it another kind of power? It is difficult to give an unqualified answer. You need to meet a particular *griot* personally in order to find out what type of power he wields.

The "story-telling" *griots* sing the great traditional epics, telling of the warlike deeds of heroes, their native land, and love. They also put on shows, since in Africa, there is no established theatre structure. They are actors, poets, dancers and mimes, and they bring all the arts into play in their performances. Since they are highly versatile, one of their roles is to dance themselves and to induce a gathering of people to dance. Some, admittedly, specialize in one or other of these fields: they express themselves through music or dancing, or through the spoken word. But others, while they play music, may also sing, tell stories and even dance.

In the days when the caste system was operating strictly, the *griots* used to meet regularly in a family context. That was very common. These family reunions were called "practice sessions". The whole family gathered together, with all generations present, and they played in order to ascertain how high their standard was. I know a story about a gathering of *griots* in Mali. I believe it is true, since many people were eyewitnesses to it. Every seven years, the great *griots* of Mali met to repair the roof of a hut. They sang and played music at the same time, whereupon the roof flew up into the air as if by enchantment and landed on the ground. They restored the roof. Then they started singing again, and the roof rose up from the ground and settled on the hut. This phenomenon has something to do with magic power. But, ultimately, all forms of expression contain a grain ▶



A griot from West Africa being interviewed

Photo © Almasy, Paris

Photo M. Salvaro/Unesco

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Photo © Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris

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Photo © Hoa-Qui, Paris

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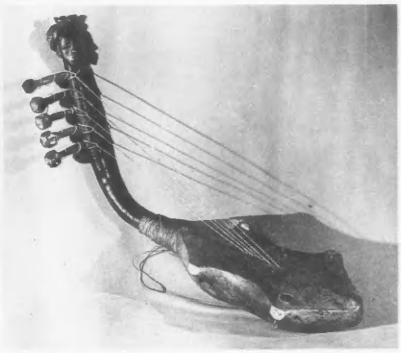

Photo © Hoa-Qui, Paris

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Four examples of Africa's wealth of traditional musical instruments: (1) Bambara wind instrument from Mali; (2) a Gabonese harp; (3) anthropomorphic harp from Zaire; (4) guitar of the Mangbetu people of Zaire. The neck is surmounted by a carved wooden head.

of magic power, in that they draw on a certain spiritual force. And so the music and singing of the Malian *griots* was able to move the roof of a hut.

African musical instruments vary from region to region. Mali is the cradle of African music, and since the empire of Sundiata it has influenced the art of music in other regions. The instruments found there are more sophisticated than those of northern Senegal, where 80 per cent of the music consists of rhythm—of drumming, in other words. In a Wolof group, in northern Senegal, there are at least fourteen types of percussion, whereas in a Malian group the percussion is accompanied by more elaborate instruments such as the *kora* or the *balafon*. The great musicians of northern Senegal play the *halam* (a Wolof name for a five-stringed guitar, a very old African instrument) and most of them served their apprenticeship in Mali. In Casamance, we play the *bolong*, a sort of three-stringed *kora*, which sounds like a double-bass; but percussion predominates.

No instrument is particularly easy to play well. The *kora*, for example, poses problems, since its music cannot be dissociated from the Mandingo language. You have to know that language in order to play the instrument. There is no score, and it is played by ear. And so you have to remember the tunes, and in order to do this, you have to know the history. Since history is invariably recounted in Mandingo or Malinke, it is indispensable to know the language in order to attempt to play the *kora*. However, it has recently become a little more accessible. Many musicians play it while singing in Wolof or in Portuguese Creole. My father usually sang in Portuguese Creole. I personally welcome this move towards a widening of horizons, and I should like the *kora* to become a universal instrument like so many others.

Trumpet-players in the Madagascan group Hira-Gasy. Instruments of European origin are played in many parts of Africa today.

Photo © All Rights Reserved

In Africa there are many kinds of percussion instruments. Each ethnic group has its own. The Mandingo, for example, play the *koutero*, the Malinke the *djembé*. In the forest regions of Central Africa, there are others, different from those of the savannah. There are as many types of percussion as there are ethnic groups.

Until relatively recently, playing a musical instrument was not an activity for women, who were expected to sing. If necessary, they accompanied themselves on a primitive Malian instrument made of iron, but that was all. Usually, a woman sings as an accompaniment to her husband while he plays an instrument. Singing is for women and instruments are for men. Male African society probably considered that it was easier to sing. This situation has now changed. I was able to observe this in 1977, at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Cultures, held in Lagos, Nigeria: there was an all-female Guinean instrumental ensemble playing the *kora* and the *balafon*. I have also seen a women's orchestra playing modern instruments such as the saxophone, trumpet, Western-style percussion, and electric guitar.

I return to my country every year, or at least every two years. It makes me feel more alive, it's a tonic and it gives me confidence. The fact of being "cut off" from my African roots has a good effect on my music. Not being in my own country, I can see more clearly what is happening there, and this gives me inspiration. From afar, you can see your country in a truer light, in greater depth and with stronger affection. In my native land I would probably be taken up with concerns that have nothing to do with my music. What is more, I do not feel very far away: I am only four hours' flying time from Senegal.

In Senegal people listen to all kinds of music, from James Brown to Johnny Halliday. It's quite a medley. Manu Dibango, the Cameroonian from Paris or the Parisian from Cameroon, whichever you prefer, is someone who is doing a great deal of work for Africa. He is a great musician. He has long defended the cause of African music, as I myself and other African musicians have done. This puts him in a sympathetic light. He richly deserves his success, for he has worked very hard. According to him, we are witnessing "the birth of a new race, an Afro-European race", and "European music must not remain in its ghetto".

I believe that neither European music nor African music should remain in its ghetto, for they both need to evolve through their relations with each other. Staying in one's ghetto means failing to develop. The future of the world lies in the intermingling of people and cultures. For music, the pattern of development is similar.

It is a mistake to think that for traditional

In African music in the past the role of women was to sing, not to play instruments. But today things have changed and groups of women musicians are not uncommon. Right, women musicians from Mali.

Photo © All Rights Reserved

music development means deterioration. In Africa, traditional music associated with traditional instruments does not rule out other forms of music which are played on Western instruments. Since colonization 300 years ago, traditional music has assimilated the accordion, the harmonica and the guitar. But until recently this branch of music has been rejected by Westerners.

Only twenty years ago, people thought that Africans should confine themselves to playing the tom-toms! The time has come for Westerners to adjust their stereotyped view of African culture and acknowledge the coexistence of traditional music with other forms of musical expression. I defend traditional music, for it can change and develop. And I should like the form resulting from contact with Western music to win recognition in France.

It is true that the *griot's* approach is poles apart from that of the European musician. In Africa, music has a social role to play. Its prime function is to accompany celebrations and to put across a philosophy. Nothing else! Westerners relate to music in a wholly different way. The act of listening is all-important; they expect the musician to deliver a discourse. In the past few years, however, an inter-reaction has gradually been taking place between European and African music. European audiences no longer react to African music as if it were a museum piece. And the Afro-Europeans have realized that they must not go on repeating the faithfully handed-down ancestral rhythms on their percussion instruments if they want to make tradition relevant to the circumstances of modern Africa and to a type of music that expresses urbanization and the mutual impact of civilizations.

As far as I am concerned, traditional forms of music are the most important, since they underlie everything else. I have kept the polyrhythmic character of African music and our own special way of communicating with an audience. By playing and recording in Europe I have learned a great deal. Everything must be carefully set up, with studied arrangements and the quality of sound regulated to suit my instruments—in short, my contact with Western technology has been invaluable. But I regard myself as a messenger with ideas to communicate to a European audience. I belong to a different century from that of my father, and I want society to change and develop. ■

Photo Philip Gaunt/Unesco

A group of traditional African musicians performing before an audience of thousands during the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Cultures held in Lagos (Nigeria) in 1977.

LAMINE KONTE, *Senegalese* griot, *is a storyteller, author and composer of music. The son of Dialy Keba Konte, a famous* griot *of the Casamance region of Senegal, he came to Europe in 1971 and embarked on an international career. He has made more than 10 LP albums including* Chants Nègres, Chants du Monde *(Negro-African poems and songs) and* La Kora du Sénégal. *He was responsible for the music in* Bako, *a film made by Jacques Champreux and Cheikh Doukoure.*

When opera takes to the screen

by Dominique Jameux

ALTHOUGH opera and cinema may, at first glance, appear to be unlikely bedfellows, these two art forms have much in common.

Both offer us dramatic representations which come close to earning the epithet of "total art", uniting as they do around a literary text (a scenario or a libretto) and in a given setting, the combined glories of light, colour, objects and costumes, and of the voice and the actor's art. And if, today, the cinema dominates the field of the audio-visual spectacle, opera can claim to be its oldest manifestation. Cross-breeding between the two is therefore both natural and frequent, if at times problematic.

The film industry's takeover bid for opera has a long history. In recent years we have been offered such opera-films as "Losey's" *Don Giovanni*, "Bergman's" *The Magic Flute*, "Zeffirelli's" *La Traviata* and "Rosi's" *Carmen*. The quotation marks seem to imply some kind of usurpation; and quite rightly and logically so, since the reality of the opera-film lies in the adoption by a great film director of one of the best-known works of the lyric repertoire and his impression on it of a vision that is virtually that of an entirely different author, a phenomenon to which we shall return later.

In an excellent study published a few years ago[1], Emmanuel Decaux recalled the distant origins of this cross-fertilization between the two art forms. Starting at the beginning of the century, directors of silent film days made films based on the libretti of famous operas, altered or transformed in varying degrees. In 1909, Regina Badet and Max Dearly starred in a version of *Carmen*; in 1915, in the United States, the famous vamp, Theda Bara, took the lead in another *Carmen*, while, that same year, Geraldine Farrar played the same role in a Cecil B. de Mille production.

These early examples of this new genre, from the age of the silent screen, teach us that, from the beginning, the makers of opera-films were quite happy with a situation in which music was, to say the least, placed firmly in the background. Thus, unwittingly, the infancy of the new genre gave us a foretaste of what it would be in its maturity. In 1943, for example, Viviane Romance and Jean Marais were to star in what was literally a "talking" version of *Carmen*, directed by Christian-Jaque.

1. *Fascination de l'Irréel* (The Fascination of the Unreal), by Emmanuel Decaux, *Cinématographe*, November, 1979.

Photo © Keystone, Paris

Photo © Cahiers du Cinéma Collection, Paris

The earliest filmed versions of operas took many liberties with libretti and even with the musical score. Left, the great Russian bass singer Fedor Ivanovich Chaliapin (1873-1938), who created the role of Don Quixote in Massenet's* Don Quichotte *in 1910 and sang the same part in a screen version of the opera made in 1933 by the German director G.W. Pabst. The film featured episodes sung to music specially composed for the occasion.

Photo © Cahiers du Cinéma Collection, Paris

One method of bringing opera to the screen is simply to film a live performance, providing "an eyewitness account of an event and a record for the archives" and striking "a balance between the quality one has the right to demand from any artistic presentation and the touching precariousness of an operatic performance". A striking example of this kind of film is that made of Mozart's* Don Giovanni *at the Salzburg Festival in 1953 (above).

Photo © Cahiers du Cinéma collection, Paris

"Since television has become part of our daily lives the opera film has more often than not been designed for showing on the small screen." One of the most famous examples of an opera film produced for TV in the studio is the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's version of Mozart's* The Magic Flute *(1975) later adapted for the cinema. Right, Josef Kostlinger in the role of Tamino.

The filming of opera in a studio with a brilliant cast and a setting similar to that of an opera stage has become particularly widespread in the Federal Republic of Germany. Right, Mirella Freni (Suzanne), Maria Ewing (Cherubin) and Kiri Te Kanawa (the Countess) in Mozart's opera* The Marriage of Figaro, *brought to the screen in 1976 by the French director Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.

Photo © Cahiers du Cinéma Collection, Paris

At the same time, famous singers were being invited by the cinema world to leave an enduring record of their art. One spectacular example was that of the great bass Chaliapin who, in 1933, appeared in a film version of *Don Quixote*, directed by G.W. Pabst. The film was designed to capitalize on his public image (in 1910, he had created the title role in this opera by Massenet, and had sung it again countless times), yet, paradoxically, in the film he neither sang to Massenet's music nor followed the libretto by Henri Cain (based on Cervantes' book). Instead, against a natural setting in Provence, Pabst recreated a new story consisting of episodes sung to music specially composed for the film by Jacques Ibert.

In this manner, the opera-film hesitantly groped its way forward. It was as if the film directors were aware that, even if opera offered them raw material of high dramatic potential (and which was sure to have an impact on the public), its very nature (impossible libretti, the unattractive physiques of many singers, the artificial nature of operatic *canto* and other technical constraints) made the production of a true opera-film an extremely doubtful undertaking.

At the same time, and even before the opera-film industry proper had developed, its major prerequisites, ingredients which are still in use today, were falling into place—location filming for greater realism; the use of playback, essential for exterior filming and having the additional advantage of enabling singers to concentrate more on their acting; the right assumed by directors to modify original libretti and to make of them what they considered to be proper scenarios.

And what of the music in all this? One is tempted to utter the paradoxical assertion that, but for the music, the problem of the opera-film would have been resolved long ago!

The great value of the opera-film is that it introduces famous singers to an infinitely larger public than that which frequents the opera houses and at the same time creates a permanent record of their fragile, ephemeral art. But is the opera-film necessary to the achievement of these goals? We have film footage of famous singers singing their favourite arias, set within the framework of purpose-built and often rather vacuous stories which generally adopt the style of the romanticized biography. But does this matter? Richard Tauber, Jan Kiepura, Lily Pons, Georges Thill, André Baugé, Maria Cebotari, Enrico Caruso and many others, have in this way left behind them film and sound-track which, with clever editing, could become commercially viable today. Thus the stage had been reached in the saga of the relations between the two art forms at which the opera-film remained both a fascinating vision and an inaccessible goal.

It would seem that the first real opera-film was a version of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, which was made in 1930 during a tour of the United States by the company of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples. In the years following the end of the Second World War the practice of filming opera became more widespread. In these productions three names frequently recurred: Verdi as com- ▶

Photos © Cahiers du Cinéma collection, Paris

In recent years a number of major opera-films by talented directors have exploited all the technical and financial possibilities of cinema and have made a bid to stand as artistic creations in their own right. Shown here are stills from Franco Zeffirelli's* La Traviata *(above), Francesco Rosi's* Carmen *(above right), and Joseph Losey's* Don Giovanni *(opposite). These recent productions perhaps mark the start of a form which can offer the widest public the most satisfactory "substitute" for the representation of traditional opera.

▶ poser, Gallone as director and Tito Gobbi as the singing star. In 1948, a new version of *Pagliacci* was shot in the open air, with the actor/singer Tito Gobbi and the actress Gina Lollobrigida, with the dubbed voice of a singer. The film stated the problem and offered the solution—film stars, unlike most singers, act well and are credible even in close-up, whereas opera singers usually sing better than actors. Dubbing, therefore, provides the solution, and this was the method adopted in 1983 by Syberberg for his *Parsifal*.

At this point we should, perhaps, examine more closely the three types of production that today constitute the corpus of opera-films and the problems faced, and sometimes in part resolved, by each of them.

First of all there is the straightforward filming of a live performance; that is, the film which is both, as it were, an eye-witness account of an event and a record for the archives. The most striking example of this type of film is that made at the Salzburg Festival of 1953 of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, under the baton of Wilhelm Furtwängler. Its great success was due first to the musical quality of the production and also to the discreet manner in which the director, Paul Czinner, handled his subject. The camera, a privileged, well-placed spectator, is virtually neutral. The orchestra—the Vienna Philharmonic—is not, as is often the case, effaced in the filming. The décor and the costumes are traditional but beautiful. The singers, well-rehearsed in their roles, do not take on the airs of cinema actors. The sound, in this purpose-built setting, is of admirable quality.

Of the three types of opera-film, this one seems to me to be the most satisfactory. It respects the essential, that is to say the music; it enables the music-lover, to some extent, for a modest sum and with no major loss of quality, to keep abreast of the musical happenings of his time; and, for the nostalgics amongst us, it provides an example of the art of Mozartian singing of that period. Live recording also preserves the balance between the quality one has the right to demand from any artistic presentation and the touching precariousness of an operatic performance which is, in fact, part of its magic.

The second category of opera-films are those made in the studio setting. This has become an institution in the Federal Republic of Germany, where large, specialized production companies have developed a veritable "canned opera" industry. It is usually a by-product of a normal production of an opera company. A well-established production, with a brilliant, if not outstanding, cast, is filmed in a studio in a décor similar to that of an opera stage but where the acoustics are better for the initial recording as well as for the final production of the sound-track. The mobility of the camera varies. Sometimes they give the view as seen from a seat in the stalls, sometimes they appear to be moving around on the "stage". The result is a product of a very definite type, in which the direction is of fairly limited importance and which is not without a certain touch of artificiality.

Although they are very professional productions, the films produced at Hamburg at the instigation of Rolf Liebermann and *The Marriage of Figaro* directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle nevertheless give the impression of being "opera on the cheap". One of the problems of opera-films is that aesthetic considerations are closely bound up with financial, cultural and sociological factors. And this, perhaps, is a suitable point at which to open a parenthesis to consider exactly what is at stake in the opera-film "industry".

First of all, opera-films are aimed at a non-public (people who do not go to the opera) or at a public delighted to have the opportunity of seeing again the opera stars they like to hear singing certain arias, and this for a modest sum and without going to an opera house.

Secondly, the enormous increase in the cost of putting on a opera that has occurred over the past twenty years has made necessary growing support from public funds. This has created a new situation in Europe, and particularly in France—the taxpayer, who may derive no pleasure from opera, finds himself paying in part for the opera-goer's seat. The opera is no longer merely "élitist", it has also become a tax burden.

The scandalous aspect of this ransom demanded by the operatic institutions from the non-public modifies somewhat our view of the opera-film, the justification for which is that it enables members of this tax-paying non-public *also* to have access to the world of opera. Nevertheless, despite the payments they have already made as taxpayers, they are asked *in addition* to contribute, no matter how modestly, to the costs of filming by paying for their seats in the cinema.

The problem has still not been resolved. On the contrary, the gap is widening between the privileged minority that has access to operatic performances—paying a high price, it is true, but one which represents only a portion of the real cost of a seat, the remainder being paid by taxpayers who are excluded from these delights—and the non-public which is offered instead, at the true cost price even if this is lower, a by-product of real opera. Far from contributing to the reduction of social and cultural injustice, the opera-film merely emphasizes its intractable nature.

The advent of television has modified some of the factors involved but has not altered the basic problem of the opera-film. In fact, since television became part of our daily lives, the opera-film has more often than not been designed for showing on the small screen. Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* is a famous example.

The opera-film destined for television showing has its own aesthetic, cultural and economic characteristics. The small size of the screen encourages close-ups and intimate scenes; the sound is of mediocre quality; sub-titling presents difficulties; and the lighting appears flat and artificial. It is true ▶

Photo © Max Reinhardt-Forschungs und Gedenkstätte Collection, Salzburg

One approach to bringing opera to the screen is to use film actors and dub them on the sound-track with the voices of opera singers. This method was adopted by H.J. Syberberg of the Federal Republic of Germany when he filmed Wagner's opera* Parsifal *in 1981. Above, on set during filming.

▶ that the entry of opera into tens of thousands of homes, sometimes more, is to its credit, particularly since entertainment in the home is perceived, wrongly, as being free. But it cannot be denied that the "magic" engendered by the gathering of the public in front of the big screen in a darkened cinema—already less than that experienced in an opera house—is totally absent from the home. It is well known that the mere fact of being in the domestic environment is enough to remove all sense of enchantment from a spectacle already lacking the glitter which has traditionally been an integral part of it.

Under these conditions, how can television avoid the charge of being associated with the degradation of the original operatic experience, which relegates the televiewer, like the person who sees an opera-film in the dark of the cinema, to the rank of a second-class citizen in the world of opera?

The only way in which the opera-film can be presented to the consumer in such a manner as to make him forget that he is being offered only *ersatz* opera is to devise a form of filming which provides a "plus factor" unique to the cinema, so that the spectator sees something that is not a lesser version of the original opera, but something else, perhaps something better.

This can be achieved by our third category of opera-films—the director's film. A great film director is invited to take in hand a great operatic score. There will be no lack of resources, since once we leave the opera house for the film set we leave behind the world of public subsidies to enter the realm where profit is king.

Everything is done to make the opera-film an original work, an artistic creation in its own right, standing side by side with the original and worthy of being called, for example, "Losey's" *Don Giovanni*. There are fantastic décors, sumptuous costumes, operatic stars duly promoted by press and show-bizz. The director himself feels free to do what he will with libretto and score, and displays a daredevil insouciance that is justified as the new approach of an artist of today to a work of art of the past. The music may often suffer, to the benefit of the spectacle, but the filmed work will be able to compete on equal terms with the original. And in this way the gap between the élite and the masses, between a real and simulated experience, between the genuine and the imitation, can at last be reduced.

It is only fair to point out that this kind of opera-film is still in its infancy. Productions such as Bergman's *The Magic Flute* (which, to be sure, has something of both the first and the third of the three categories of opera-film we have defined above) have shown that they can offer us true musical and dramatic emotion and that those who have access to the privileged world of opera should not look down their aristocratic noses at productions that have given so much pleasure to so many. Nothing need stand in the way of further progress. ■

DOMINIQUE JAMEUX *is a French musicologist, writer and radio producer. Among his published works are* Richard Strauss *(1980, new edition 1986),* Alban Berg *(1980) and* Boulez *(1984). His book* Lulu (d'Alban Berg) *will appear later this year. With the composer Michel Fano he co-authored a series of introductory programmes to contemporary music that were broadcast on French television in 1981.*

A world history of music

Specialists from all over the world and from many disciplines are currently collaborating on a comprehensive world history, *Music in the Life of Man* (MLM), sponsored by Unesco and administered through the International Music Council. Aimed at the layman as well as the specialist, *Music in the Life of Man* will deal with all types of music and all aspects of musical life throughout history. It will provide descriptions of the historical development of music and its present state in the main geocultural regions of the world, taking into account the particular philosophies or concepts of history of each region, the factors that influenced its historical development, and the musical linkages within and between regions. Since the project was formally launched in 1982, a series of meetings have been held at which a president and Board of Directors representing six major international organizations were designated. A general co-ordinator and regional co-ordinators for the principal regions were also appointed and tables of contents for the various regional volumes drawn up. The actual writing is now well under way. MLM is being written "from within" by scholars from the cultural regions themselves and edited by an international panel of experts. The work is scheduled to appear in 1991, initially in 3 editions (English, French and German) but it is hoped that it will eventually be published in several other languages—Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Spanish—and in two-volume condensations in as many tongues as possible. The present plan calls for an edition in 12 large illustrated volumes, accompanied by a set of recordings in cassette or compact disc. Ten volumes (nos. II to XI) will be devoted to the cultural regions, while the other two (nos. I and XII) will contain essays and indexes of more general concern. At the end of each regional volume will be "country profiles" of each nation in the region containing the basic facts of its national life, its culture, its music and its history.

In the words of Barry S. Brook, President of the Board of Directors, "What makes this unlike any previous world history is its commitment to equal treatment for all cultures and its enlistment of scholars from all corners of the earth in the writing and editing process. . . The historiography of world music will be changed radically by the *Music in the Life of Man* project." ■

Photo © Jacques Guillaume, Paris

The modern soundscape and noise pollution

by Nils Lennart Wallin

THE demographic explosion in the modern world, combined with the increasingly dense network of urban, industrial, agricultural and air traffic systems, has generated such by-products as pollution and the disappearance of some animal species.

Another by-product, the nature of which has not yet been fully explored, is the new soundscape, created largely by the enormous increase in non-organic and unintentional sounds.

When such sounds become positively disturbing, noise limitation regulations are established. In this field, governments often have to balance conflicting rights and interests. To take one example, reducing the speed of commuter trains in order to bring down noise levels must be reconciled with the need to maintain an efficient transit system. The problem becomes complicated when intentional, organic sounds are objected to: limitations imposed on public address systems could, for example, be considered a violation of the right to free speech.

Attempts to define what is harmful in the new soundscape inevitably raise questions of human values and human rights. To dispel the vague prejudices which often bedevil such discussions, let us first examine, independently of political, ideological, ethical and socio-economic considerations, the precise effects of sound on the hearing system.

Auditory loss may affect the system at two points: the peripheral point (that is, the ear) and the central point (that is, the re- ▶

Many young people today use portable tape-recorders to cut themselves off from the clamour of the street—sometimes in protest against aspects of urban life which they find repugnant—and listen undisturbed to the music they love. Above, beside the grave of the American pop idol Jim Morrison at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris a young man listens to the famous singer's voice.

levant parts of the central nervous system, mainly the brain-stem and the neo-cortex). The consequences of damage are quite different in each case.

Most auditory injuries consist of peripheral loss, in other words reduced hearing capacity with respect to frequency range and intensity. Changes in this capacity can be measured and diagnosed, and norms for different age groups are generally accepted and form the basis for most legislative regulation and industrial injury claims. Peripheral loss depends upon two different kinds of pathological change: conductive loss (or deafness) is an impairment of one or more of the sound conductors and is often caused by otosclerosis. Sensoneural loss occurs within the cochlea. One example of this is Ménière's disease; another is loudness recruitment, the probable cause of the deafness of Beethoven, who complained that he could not hear people speaking and that when they shouted at him it became unbearable. The disease with which we are concerned here is the sensoneural disorder known as tinnitus.

Tinnitus is noise-induced hearing loss. It normally occurs among the elderly but is increasingly found among younger people. By the early 1960s, 35 out of every 1,000 Americans suffered from tinnitus to the extent that it interfered with their work. Most lost the ability to hear high frequencies (the highest notes of the piano).

Noise-induced hearing loss is affected by a combination of sound intensity (measured logarithmically in decibels) and length of time exposed. The British otologist D.R. Hanson recommends one hour as the maximum permissible exposure to 99 decibels, and 88 seconds for exposure to 135 decibels. The average sound level during a two-hour symphony concert can range from 95 to 97 decibels on the podium. According to this recommendation, orchestral players should never exceed one hour's work per day. This of course is unrealistic, but it does support the claim of most orchestras that working time should not exceed five hours, especially in view of the high attention levels required

Photo © Claude Sauvageot, Paris

By the 4th month after conception the human foetus can hear. During the 5 months before birth the foetus hears the heart-beat of the mother and from the 7th month external sound stimuli are registered. The development of the child's auditory capacities in the first months after birth are clearly influenced by the soundscape and the child's early perceptions of music, often in the cradle. Right, a Vietnamese mother rocks her baby.

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The sonar environment or "soundscape" influences the development of the auditory sensibility from childhood on. Far left, tranquility reigns on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the Andes, where the only sounds are made by the water, the wind, insects and birds. The boat, a* tortora, *takes its name from the lakeside reeds of which it is made. Left, a totally different soundscape in a modern city, where life is dominated by the deafening noise of traffic.

which can cause both auditory and emotional stress.

Dr. Hanson has compiled data on noise-induced hearing loss in young people who have attended pop concerts and discothèques or used Walkman devices. There are clinical cases of deafness being caused by a sound shock, as when entering a discothèque.

Tinnitus is a failure of the haircells lining the basilar membrane of the cochlea. It is the movement of these cells, in response to incoming sound waves, which converts the signals to electrical impulses. The size of the movement is proportional to the amplitude of the sound. Haircells in the chinchilla show irreversible damage after exposure to pop music at 120 decibels for 12 minutes or 90 decibels for 3 hours. Different haircells respond to different frequencies and tinnitus occurs at those frequencies at which the corresponding haircell has been damaged. The high-pitched whistle which sufferers from this disorder often hear is probably a subjective sound produced by the brain itself when registering the lack of neuronal spontaneous background noise from that part of the basilar membrane where the haircells are damaged, as a signal to which the brain must respond.

If the central brain processes are damaged (perhaps as the result of a stroke) the perception of sounds and music may be affected. The resulting disabilities may include loss of spatial perception, raised threshold of attention, inability to define pitch and co-ordinate movements, and loss of memory. So far as we know, brain damage cannot be caused by too much or too strong sound. However, a complete lack of auditory stimulation can cause such damage, especially early in life. Sensory deprivation leads to the non-development of neuronal pathways and synapses which can inhibit sensitivity and the ability to register experience later in life.

On the other hand, while excessive stimulation may not cause direct physical damage it can, if not appropriate, create stress, lack of attention, poor socialization and the inability to form values. There is disharmony between neurophysiological brain patterns and the surrounding social and biospheric conditions at crucial points in the development of the personality. As the physiologist Rainer Sinz, of the Federal Republic of Germany, has pointed out: "Early and permanent exposure to music in the form of a sound level background leads to the premature practice of ignoring the noise level in overcrowded urban areas. This not only raises the threshold of audibility, it also reduces the differentiated emotional processing of music nuances of moderate intensity. Acoustical stress leads to a switch-off reaction from attention to frustration and, furthermore, to deficit sensitivity and rudimentary musicality."

Bearing in mind the relationship between music as a stimulus and the inner neurophysiological clocks, it would appear that the perfected (and thus quite artificial) pulse of much synthesized pop music does not coincide with what mankind, regardless of culture, has developed as music—breathing and developing in close interaction with our inner rhythmic pulses. Its merciless regularity and simplified sonority are inhuman. The effect of this music injected directly into the ears through a Walkman may cause other possibly negative effects. The Walkman enables a young person to become isolated from the throbbing life of the street in all its complexity. Such deliberate isolation is of course in itself a protest at overcrowded and deindividualizing conditions. However, the consequence will be a loss of part of the multimodal perception and observation which is the purpose of our senses in daily life: what is listened to does not correspond to what is seen.

The enormous and increasing amounts of sound which characterize today's soundscape are a physical threat to the auditory system, when exposure is long and frequent, and a source of mental and emotional fatigue which inhibits the development of ethical, social and intellectual values. Among the changes to be expected from such processes is a trend towards strongly standardized and simplified musical structures. The fact that new soundscapes affect the small child and possibly even the foetus means that the process of change will accelerate.

It is easier to prevent physical damage to the cochlea than it is to prevent tiredness, poor attention span, stereotyped emotional patterns and lowered sensitivity to sophisticated intellectual products. Hence many countries have enacted legislation which regulates exposure to high intensity levels and long continuous noise levels in industrial work.

In spite of all this, I would go along with Hanson and Sinz in advising against legislation affecting pop music, discothèques and the Walkman. There are strong sociological reasons why (mainly) young people engage in these activities: the desire for solidarity, the desire to belong to a community, to overcome loneliness, to escape from and forget reality. These are good reasons for society not to legislate but to try, in spite of all the difficulties, whether from powerful commercial interests, mass media propaganda, or elsewhere, to meet the needs of young people by modifying some aspects of pop music, to offer them challenging alternatives, to convince musicians in the pop industry of the need to modify the music (as some musicians have already done) and also the industry itself.

Let us not forget that one of the reasons why people like music is their need to break silence. We need to make noise—but preferably below 90 decibels. ■

NILS LENNART WALLIN, *of Sweden, studied musicology, philosophy and ethno-anthropology at the Universities of Uppsala and Stockholm and music at the Schola Cantorum, Bâle. A teacher of music, the history of music and music criticism, he is a former director-general of the Swedish National Concerts Institute, (1963-1970), of the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, and of Stockholm's concert hall (1970-1976).*

Year of Peace: 4

Olof Palme, the Prime Minister of Sweden, was assassinated on 28 February 1986. The text below consists of extracts from a speech he made on 21 October 1985 at United Nations headquarters in New York during the fortieth session of the UN General Assembly. We publish this text as a tribute to Olof Palme's lifelong dedication to the ideals of the United Nations.

... Peace is, of course, the fundamental aim of the United Nations. We have come to recognize that peace is certainly more than the absence of military violence. It is also stability in relations between States, based on the observance of legal principles. One field where co-operation between States is absolutely necessary is the fight against terrorism in all its forms, these cruel slayings of innocent civilians.

The rule of law is of vital importance to peaceful international relations. In particular, this is strongly felt in the smaller countries. When the integrity and independence of one small country is violated, it often sends a vibration of anger and anxiety through the hearts and minds of the citizens in other small countries. For them, the rule of law and the observance of our common commitments under the Charter are seen as imperatives for a future in peace and security. (...)

In our era of growing international interdependence we have to recognize that threats to peace frequently originate from conditions inside the countries. Misery, hunger, denial of basic human rights, are the causes of political and social upheaval. (...)

Brutal violations of human rights occur in many countries, but in South Africa they are written into the very laws of the country. In this way the policy of apartheid is unique in all its moral abomination. Apartheid is doomed, as is South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. While fearing that it will end in a chaos of destruction and bloodshed for which the white régime will bear full responsibility, we should not abandon the hope that a peaceful transition to a non-racial democratic society may still be possible through dialogue and agreement. It is the duty of the outside world to assist this struggle for freedom (...).

We are witnessing massive migrations on an unprecedented scale between States and between continents. The reasons are many, among them hunger, war, natural disasters, persecution. The cultural clashes that are inevitable in this process have led in many countries to a renewal of chauvinism and racism. It is time we became more attentive to this particular danger. We are helped in this task by the rising anger, enthusiasm and readiness to act demonstrated by some people of the younger generations. It does honour to them (...) that they have adopted the watchword "Don't touch my pal". There are many adults, in and out of Government, who would do well to listen and take notice.

For many people around the world the United Nations stands for something very concrete, a significant element in their personal everyday life.

A child in Africa learns to read in a school financed by Unesco. A farmer in Asia receives a sack of seed labelled "FAO"—the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations—or "WFP"—World Food Programme. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with its technical projects, touches almost every developing country in the world. Refugees in all continents are protected by the activities of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Women fighting for equality and dignity are encouraged by discussions in United Nations forums such as the recent Nairobi Conference. Many civilians in many countries have felt more secure because of the presence of United Nations peace-keeping forces. If, as we sincerely hope, the initiative taken by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to immunize all children in the world against serious infectious diseases by 1990 is crowned with success, innumerable families will think of the United Nations as a benefactor. ■

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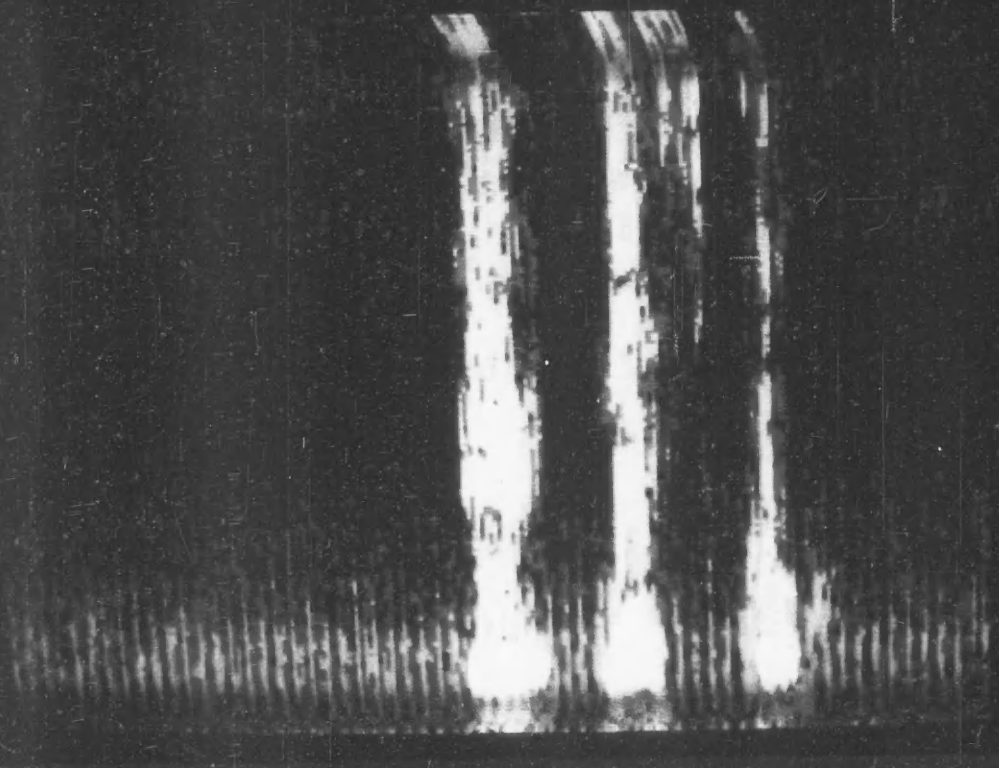
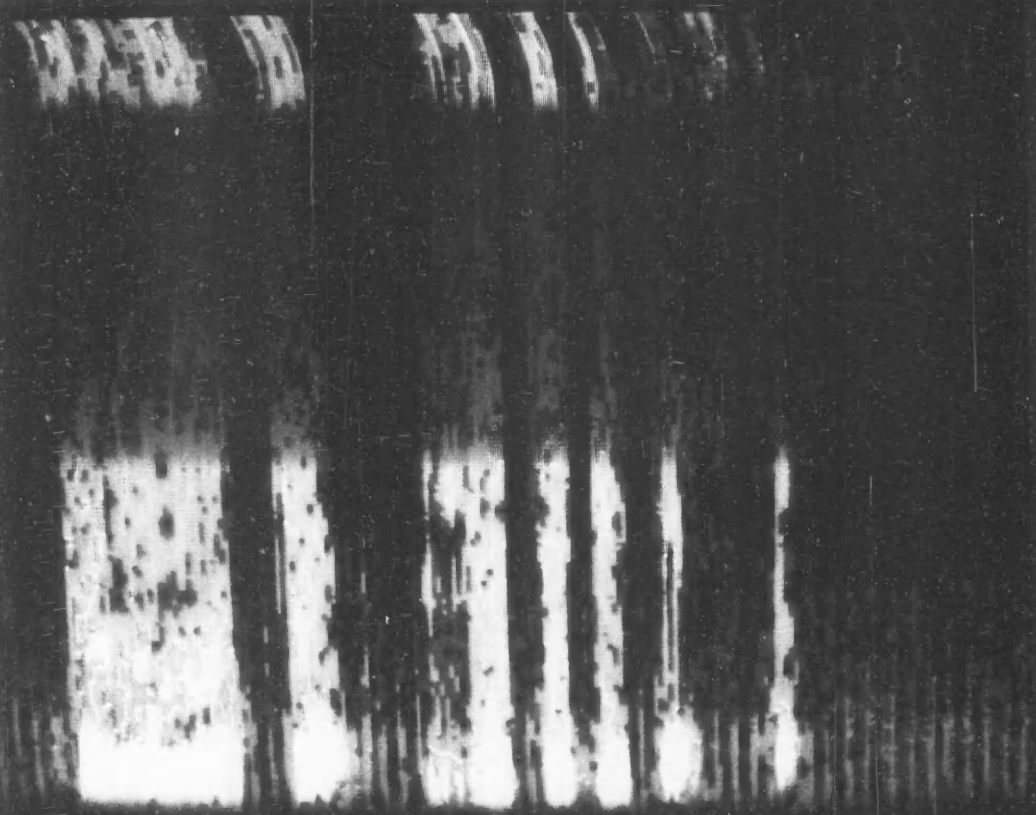


Acoustics, the science of sound and of its effects on people, is of great importance to contemporary music in its search for new sound effects. These two photos show the spectrographic analysis of the voice of a young Frenchman saying the word "Unesco" (above) and (below) the phrase "Bonjour aux amis de l'Unesco" ("Hello, friends of Unesco").

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